TRAVELS AND REFLECTIONS

BY

NOEL BUXTON

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TRAVELS

and

REFLECTIONS

By

The Right Hon. NOEL BUXTON, *M.P.*

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TO

MY WIFE

PREFACE

IT HAS BEEN my good fortune to visit in many parts of the world scenes that lay outside the lines of ordinary travel: but in writing a volume of this kind one has to face the task of selection, and I must necessarily exclude some happy recollections—among them my days of camping in the New Zealand bush; the cattle-runs of Queensland; the sheep-runs of South Australia; and the opening of the first Turkish Parliament.

It would be attractive to describe my conversations with men whose ambitions disturbed the world's peace, such as Baron Aehrenthal and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria; to sketch the personality of foreign acquaintances whose activity brought them to a violent end—Djavid, the financial brains of the Young Turk junta which overthrew the Sultan, executed for supposed conspiracy against the dictatorship of Ismail Kemal; Enver, the popular hero of the Turkish Revolution, who murdered Nazim Pasha to prevent peace with Bulgaria, kept the Arab tribes fighting against Italy after peace was signed, and was finally killed fighting in Turkestan; Talaat, who brought Turkey into

the Great War, who organized the greatest crime of this age, the virtual extermination of the Armenians living in Turkey, and who after the war was assassinated by an Armenian in Berlin; Stambuliski, the burly Bulgarian peasant who denounced King Ferdinand's war policy, was imprisoned all through the war, became Premier and signed the peace with the Allies, imposed on Bulgaria a policy of pacifism and democracy, and was ousted by a military coup and hunted to death; Radich, the erratic Croat leader, beloved of his whole nation, who recklessly defied the Serbian tyranny, and was mortally wounded on the floor of the Parliament at Belgrade.

I might tell how I escaped the Turkish authorities at Adrianople and reached the ruined villages whose destruction they wished to conceal; how I saw the Rumanian army march across the bridge at Budapest to turn out the Communist Government of Hungary; and how I was arrested as a spy.

But one must select what is of most permanent interest, and in doing so, I have included the two kinds of journey which have fallen to my lot. I travelled first for travel's sake only, but these journeys roused my interest in political

matters which, in turn, led me to travel with a purpose. I have not, therefore, rigidly excluded politics, but the reader will observe that where I have included them they refer to questions which are still alive or to conditions whose interest is only increased by the revolutionary changes which have supervened.

I desire to thank Messrs. John Murray, and the Editors of *The Contemporary Review*, *The 19th Century and After*, and *The Fortnightly Review*, for their kind permission to use material published by them.

NOEL BUXTON

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April 1929

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AMONG THE KURDS

CHAPTER I

AMONG THE KURDS

RIDING A KURDISH PACK-HORSE is a special art. The saddle consists of a stiff wooden frame—surmounted by a bundle of sacking and odd strips of carpet and leather—padded with straw, and held together with string. It is loosely attached to the animal's body, and one must be constantly balancing oneself in order to keep it upright. The width of the saddle and the absence of stirrups add to the discomfort. On the other hand, the pack-horse is a host in himself. Reins are quite superfluous. He knows his way better than his rider.

It was in this manner that we crossed the wild borderlands between Turkey and Persia, travelling from the Persian town of Tabriz and getting horses at Salmas. Our chief impressions were neither of Turks nor of Persians, but of Kurds, and it was fitting that, in an inspection of that country, the Kurdish factor should come first. To the eyes of the traveller the Kurd was predominant. He was, indeed, spreading himself daily farther—by the seizure of lands and houses, sometimes with Govern-

ment help, sometimes on his own account. But even where they were in a minority, Kurds made the greatest show. They rode—and rode the best horses; they carried rifles; bullied the Turks; wore fine, bright-coloured clothes; and could afford to live on frequented routes while the Christians were safest in remote places. They were of much more direct importance in the land than the Turks or Persians. We therefore saw all we could of them.

The Kurd is happiest on the hills with his sheep. He loves his flocks, and has been described as "married to his cattle". Till the October snow drives him from the heights, he is a plague to the Englishman trying to stalk moufflon or ibex. The pastoral and nomadic habits of the Kurds belong properly to the more southern districts, from which they can move in winter to the Mesopotamian plains and remain in their beloved tents. In the airy shades of these spacious awnings of black homespun goat's hair, a chief seems to wear a dignity that you miss in a house. The nakedness of his children and the scanty rags of his women seem appropriate; the furniture, quilts, boxes of clothes, and cooking-pots attain a neatness quite astonishing. Even weaving is

practised on his improvised looms. He serves you sour milk in a generous bowl—the "butter in a lordly dish" of Deborah. You recline on a fine carpet. He may live largely by theft, yet his life is harmonious with his surroundings. But where the race has spread to the elevated hill-country farther north, too far for migration to the plains, he is driven to shelter in houses for the four months of snow; and he adopts the simplest form of dwelling, a mere excavation with a flat roof of wattle and clay, supported on poles—a substantial reproduction of the tent to which he returns at the first suggestion of spring. There are no windows, only small holes for smoke and light in the roof, and a minimum of outer doors. The village resembles a rabbit-warren. The inhabitants, like enlarged prairie-dogs, climb up to peep at the traveller. No dwelling less ventilated than these can be devised, and domestic habits, suited to the open air, reduce them quickly to unimaginable squalor.

Arriving at sundown, exhausted with your ten hours' march, you look anxiously for a single dwelling which has been modernized to the extent of one room above ground. More than once we were disappointed and were

forced to burrow to escape the cold. The subterranean passages resemble a coal-mine. One gropes along in stooping position and stumbles over the irregular, broken floor. The illusion is complete when you come to a room full of ponies. Next to this room is that of your host's family, in no way superior, and wafting into the chamber allotted to yourself an odour not less marked than that of the stable. You thank Heaven that the nasal sense becomes blunted with time. You get out your kettle and tin of meat and prepare your supper. Stepping out before bedtime to sniff some pure air in the brilliant moonlight, you find the sheep lying crowded about the door, most human of all domestic beasts in these Eastern lands, where once, on a night made familiar to our childhood:

> Glimmering under the starlight,
> The sheep lay white around.

Our host at one such dwelling was a handsome man, distinctly old, but just about to add to his harem, to the existing members of which he introduced us *en bloc*. He pointed to one, saying: "This is the best looking." The other two appeared unconcerned at this reflec-

tion on their charms, perhaps because the favourite was soon to be superseded. The old man vehemently urged upon us Kurdish wives. He would find them for us of *Ashirat* (noble) blood. He added, in true Kurdish spirit, that we must pay a high price. He was himself not only *Ashirat*, but a considerable landlord, yet his house was not much removed from the lowest standard. Though it furnished a night of profound sleep, the relief of getting above ground next morning was extreme.

It is still quite dark when the horse-drivers take your baggage. Your kettle boils, and you get tea and a biscuit with the help of candle-light. With a minimum of washing-up you pack your tea-basket and emerge above ground. The starlit air is indescribably fresh, and you walk the first mile to warm yourself as the night fades. At last the sun shoots suddenly over the hills. All round you are sweeping mountains clothed with scanty yellow grass, a world of golden colour strangely uniform to English eyes; the slopes are not precipitous, but rise to a great height—their bases nowhere less than 5,000 feet above sea-level. The whole effect is of our own Border hills on a magnified

scale, not destitute of vegetation as in Persia, but fit for grazing up to the summits. Through these hills you move all day, generally across slopes, sometimes in deep gorges, sometimes over passes 7,000 feet high. You walk up steep paths to ease your horse's legs, or down them to ease your own. But the sun gets hot and makes you lazy. You halt an hour for lunch, and the gendarmes at their caracol give you water. You mount again and soon wish there were less sun and more incident—nothing all day but a caravan or two, an eagle, a distant village, the latter significant in this vast unutilized world. You get bored with the unwonted absence of talk, action, reading, writing, and the monotony of movement, continued day after day. All the poems you know by heart, called to mind and pieced together, are long ago exhausted. You get used to it. Why worry because you are blankly idle? Sitting sideways on your pack-saddle you may as well yield to sleep. You wake to the bells of a passing caravan. It is Kurds again, riding armed, or a chief's wife with her attendants; then nothing more occurs till you come on black Kurdish tents surrounded by flocks and ragged children.

The scenery in these lands has rightly been named sculpturesque rather than picturesque. There is little to entrance one in detail. If now and then a marshy spot grows soft grass like Europe, and peewits rise from it, the impression is of something very precious. The land is naked and untidy; its raggedness specially strikes the visitor from that most perfectly clothed of all lands, Great Britain. Its natural beauties are elemental, the brilliance of sun and moon and stars, sapphire lakes and sapphire sky, and vast spaces of gold-grey land.

Deep and elemental also are the pleasures of the life—fourteen hours daily in the open air (an allowance which no British sport can be made to yield); a freedom from letters and papers, which not even a sea voyage now secures; unsullied weather without risk of change; health of such perfection as is attained in no other way. You understand the Kurd's refusal to be anything but a nomad.

The disinclination of the Kurds to settle is great, and one of the results was the forcible occupation of Armenian villages for the winter months, providing the advantages, without the

responsibilities, of housekeeping. The "right of quarter" was claimed from early times. On it the Turks endeavoured to found a tax. Now, however, affairs were more brutally arranged. The Government itself—where Kurds were demanding houses, as, for instance, those who left Persia for Turkey were doing—turned the Armenian out of his paternal home, leaving the gendarmes and local officials to select their pet aversions as victims. This astonishing practice we found in full operation in a remote district.

Whole districts were abandoned to Kurds when the Russian armies retired in 1829, 1855, and 1878 from Turkish soil, because violence was bound to follow. You found on all hands villages now Kurd which were till lately Armenian. Where settlement had become a habit, many Kurds had grown rich out of the lands taken wholesale from Armenians after the great massacres, and often a village, which, though feudal, seemed till lately uniformly poor, now surrounded an upstanding white-washed house and began to wear the proper aspect of a feudal property.

Of the Kurd's religion, little appears to be ascertained in detail except its variety and

A KURD'S HOME

unorthodoxy. His rendering of Mahomedanism was most notable for its rejection of the woman's veil. In this he was, unawares, in the van of the liberal movements of Islam, for the *yashmak* embodies the most fatal of the ideas which retard Mahomed's followers and establish the conservatism of their creed—it proclaims and encourages an inferiority in their sex. A large proportion of the Kurds are Kizilbashis, heretical Moslems with pro-Christian leanings, despised by the orthodox Mussulman.

Fostered as the Kurds were by a pampering Government, and accustomed to live at the expense of other people's comfort, it was not surprising that they evolved a disposition and manner regrettably unattractive. The Albanian, in Old Serbia as it was before the Balkan War, living by violence, looked perhaps more savage, with his shaven crown and tag of hair behind; but he was known for loyalty, and there was a beauty, albeit a ferocious one, in his tiger-like figure. It may be unfair to generalize, but there are certainly a vast number of Kurds totally without the crude dignity that usually goes with domination. With the power of a feudal caste they combine, not the style of the noble savage or of a generous Robin Hood,

but the habits of noisy chafferers and the petty stinginess of diligent pickpockets. They snatch and beg like spoilt children. When one of them has received payment for some service, his colleagues complain that he has got too much. Whatever takes their fancy—food, field-glasses, everything—they cry, "Give, Give," like the horse-leech's daughter. While you hand a tip to the leader of the Kurdish escort furnished by your host, his companion picks your pocket from behind. One readily appreciates the unceasing execration which every other party—Persian, Armenian, Turk—be he driver, villager, gendarme, or official—pours out upon the Kurd, with the untranslatable oaths for which the land is famous.

We had secured from the Russian Commandant at Urmia an introduction to a great Kurdish chief, and his warriors, ragged, but armed with a recent type of magazine rifle, rode at our side. As we left the level plain, luxuriant with melons and Lombardy poplars, the hills became wilder, like a magnified version of the Scottish Lowlands. The track began to

lead through deep, rocky gorges, by which alone a passage could be made between the steep mountains. The romantic aspect of our escort, their white fezes adorned with heavy black tassels which hung over their faces, was enhanced by the strangeness of our surroundings. Around us rose regular walls of rock, continuous lines of hexagonal columns, like those of Staffa or the Giant's Causeway.

Suddenly, as we reached a river valley, the intensely romantic ruins of a castle stood up against the lowering sun. Beneath it lay the dishevelled village of the chief, surrounding the modern fortress and overlooking a meadow where the valley broadened out to receive a confluent from each side of the towering castle rock.

Our steeds were pack-horses, surmounted with the gigantic edifice which in the East disgraces the name of saddle, and accustomed only to walk. But to reach the castle at a foot's pace offended the swashbuckling instinct of the tribesmen, and they broke into a canter. The sensation that one was taking part in the robber scene of a pantomime inspired us also to "play up"; and it was with a final shuffling gallop into the group of awaiting spectators that we and

our sorry nags endeavoured to do justice to the situation.

The chief—Simko Agha—a swarthy young man of some thirty years—had donned a yellow robe to receive us. With great *hauteur* he motioned us to chairs by a little paved pool into which fell spring water. He and his brother took seats on the opposite side of the pool, across which we made the correct remarks, while tea was handed in glasses. But Simko was not communicative; and it was soon evident that he had other ideas of the way in which to maintain his dignity. His chamberlain, who seemed to be also the head cook, was placed at ten yards distance with a spent cartridge on a short stick held in his hand. The chief, sitting on his chair, then favoured us with an exhibition of trick shooting. He made good play with his Mauser, hitting the cartridge four times out of six, in each case presenting it to us. The cavaliers and henchmen stood round in admiring silence. Against the skyline, far above us, now appeared the cattle and the women, returning from the daily grazing on the upper slopes, and moving in single file down the steep descent. The haughty warriors, unused to work, paid more attention to their rifles and horses than to

their toiling wives. Just then a magpie alighted two hundred yards away across the valley. The chief fired and hit it. He was certainly a remarkable shot.

Long before sunset the deep valley was in shade, and the impression of melodrama increased, so perfectly did the pseudo-brigands play their part.

It was almost dark when we were led up the steps of the castle, the close counterpart of the medieval castle of Europe, but less fitted for defence. A single hall occupied its whole area, but there were no rooms above, and the windows on each side, with their garish coloured glass, were ample. We and the principal officials occupied a table and chairs at the end of the hall. Lining all the rest of the wall-space squatted in silence the retainers, their rifles laid before them on the floor. When the chief entered, all rose; when he sat, they sat. At intervals he would give orders in loud, angry tones; we could recognize his meaning once, when he flung his tobacco-box along the thirty feet of floor to be refilled.

An interminable waiting followed; a henchman indifferently performed a dance. We induced the chief at length to open out in talk. When in

Persia, one of our party had given great delight by showing photographs of his family, in which his father appeared in Windsor uniform, with the cross of St. Michael and St. George. Our interpreter had proceeded to say that the son was a Member of Parliament. "What of that?" said our host, "a parliament is nothing. His father is far greater; he is a general." Expecting to find in Simko Agha a similar contempt for politics and parliaments, Turkish or Persian, but anxious to get at his views, we raised the subject with diffidence. "If our Parliament", he replied, "were like the British Parliament, ours would be a fine country. But the Turkish *Mejliss* has done no good. The Persian *Mejliss* is a fraud. Its men govern with teapots. You can only govern with cannons."

N.B.: Have they not established schools?

Chief: Schools are good. We Kurds want schools, but all men say we are wild thieves. They will not let us have schools.

N.B.: The Christians have schools. What do you think of the Christians?

Chief: They do no harm, unless they want reforms.

Then, after a pause:

Why are you all unmarried?

N.B.: If we were married, we should not travel to see you.

Chief: It is better to be married than to travel. I have three wives, but only one child. I shall soon buy another wife.

Supper was worthy of old baronial days. A big tray, with meat, bread, and sour milk, was set before every three men, upon the floor. It was weird to survey that line of fighters, fading into darkness towards the end of the hall, the activity of smacking lips precluding conversation. We at the table were mercifully allowed a knife and fork. The chief carved for himself with the fingers of one hand, displaying amazing skill.

Immediately after supper the chief retired, and there followed him all but a dozen or so of notables (including the chief's brother), for whom quilts were laid on the floor. No less than four of these high personages confided to our interpreter that the others would steal our things in the night. But we slept unrobbed on our camp-beds.

A later guest of this chief was less fortunate. Simko invited to his castle the head of the Chaldean Christian community — Marshimun, entertained him at dinner, and then had him

shot. For this act of devilish treachery Simko became notorious to the British armies then serving in the Near East.

On leaving the chief's territory we fared badly. He ordered six horsemen to escort us into the neighbouring territory and hand us over to a Turkish guard-post some five hours' ride away. Near the frontier they stopped, saying that the Turkish guards would fire on them, as usual, if they came within shot. We must go on alone; and, moreover, they must have heavy baksheesh before we went on at all. We disposed of them with as little expenditure of time and coin as was feasible. We were congratulating ourselves on having escaped with sufficient daylight to reach our destination, when another gang of mounted thieves was upon us. They were, as usual, watching the track for caravans to plunder. These men were not restrained by any instructions of the chief from an inclination to strip us of our goods and clothes. Each had a rifle and dagger. We had not a revolver between us. Our only chance was to work on their fear of the chief's displeasure. This was difficult when a dozen men were thrusting their fists into our faces, and all were yelling like wildcats, so that we could not

make the interpreter hear what we wished him to say. By affecting a haughty demeanour we obtained a hearing at last and instilled a fear of Simko's wrath. We then moved on. In a flash they had galloped ahead of our pack-horses and rounded them up. At that, an Armenian member of our party, with the recklessness of his race, lost his temper, flung himself from his horse, and flew at the throat of the leader. The situation was critical. Certainly it was a close shave for our skins, for these tribesmen are the creatures of impulse. They might have taken the fancy which moved their confrères when they attacked and captured the British Consul with his escort of Indian cavalry near Shiraz, a few months before. I jumped off my horse and suppressed the Armenian just in time. It was needless to invite death. The prospect of being stripped was enough. The whole band, closing round us, elbowed and pushed us in a bullying and threatening manner. It seemed safest at last to hand some silver coins to one who appeared to be the leader. Like a pack of hounds they immediately set upon the unfortunate man, and it looked as if we should see him killed. This diversion allowed us to move forward a hundred yards or so, when we

were again pursued and surrounded. This time they were angry, and ready to use violence. They forced their hands into our pockets, and though happily our valuables (bank-notes and passports) were out of reach, they did not go without plunder in the shape of pipes and tobacco. It was now evident that only a skilful combination of bluff with the payment of blackmail would save our skins. It was a case for putting forth supreme efforts. With renewed energy our interpreter laid himself out to work upon their fears of summary punishment on their return to the castle. Suddenly the thought of it, or of possible Turkish bullets, seemed to chill them. Their threats became entreaties. Snatching from my hand the proffered silver, they galloped over the crest of the hill.

Thirty or forty of these warriors, samples of a total which is said to number 3,000 mounted rifles, were fed and housed free daily at the castle, some coming, some going, returning to the villages where they ruled as minor feudal lords. They led a life such as survived on the Scottish border till the days of Elizabeth. Plundering forays, tribal vendetta, frontier raids, pilfering, smuggling, casual killing—such are the trimmings of an existence which to these men

is traditional, and is flavoured with a dash of loyalty and romance.

There were a few Kurdish chiefs of even greater power and pomp than Simko, but their number was diminishing. Some were seeking the protection of Russia, or rather Russia was seeking to obtain their support. Turkish policy, while it left uncontrolled the petty lawlessness of the Kurds in general, had reduced the independent chiefs to a pitiable inferiority to their forbears of old.

A notable illustration of this fact was seen in the stupendous ruins of Hoshab, occupied till sixty years ago by the great family of the Bedr Khans. The traveller from Deir to Van, wandering through a desert of unpeopled hills, comes with astonishment on this palace-castle, a ruined Alnwick—but an Alnwick with 300 feet of sheer rock to heighten its romance; each of the windows of its roofless banquet-hall framing a space of sapphire sky almost, it seems, at the zenith, so precipitously does it pierce the blue.

The mud-walled hovels at its feet now shelter but a horde of Kurdish peasants, who milk

their goats at sunset on the dry, shingly bed of the river. But though in the main the castle dates from the great days of the Armenian kings, the remains of modern additions by the Kurdish chiefs attest the power from which they too have fallen. Other great feudal lordships of the past have also disappeared. A semi-independent Bey held Bitlis till 1849, when he was taken a prisoner to Constantinople. A few years later it is recorded that Sultan Abdul Mejid seriously considered the policy of settling the Kurd question by general massacre, encouraged by the successful application, by his ancestor, of this method to the Janissaries.

It was not till after the Russo-Turkish War of 1878 that the Kurds were deliberately set against the Armenians. It fell to the genius of Abdul Hamid to conceive that, as agents of destruction, a use could be found for them. If they would not be soldiers or taxpayers, they could help to domineer. If their ideas were too low for the Turkish standard, they could at least destroy those whose standard was too high for the Turks to tolerate.

So far as the Turkish Government did anything to assert public order, it was by operating against the remaining great chiefs and against

noted brigands. At the capital of a Kurd-ridden vilayet, the Vali paid us a prolonged call—a clever member of the Young Turk party whom one of us had known in Macedonia. This type was a welcome contrast to the "old" Turk, who wasted your time on such meaningless phrases as "Grâce à Dieu, la tranquillité règne partout". The French Consul dropped in also, a congenial comrade for the Vali, cynical about Armenians. We discussed the Kurds at length. The troops had lately surrounded and killed a noted Agha, who, though he had given assistance to the Government in the great massacres of 1895, had lately become too uppish for Turkish taste. His sons, too, had been put out of the way, and also, with Turkish thoroughness, his wife. A large expedition of troops and gendarmerie was now closing in on the Agha's chief colleague. This man, the Vali explained, was a mere brute. He had wantonly shot, for fun, a lunatic, one of those "village idiots" who in the East are treated with more superstitious reverence than in Northern Europe. It was hoped that he would be easy to capture, because the now dead Agha had always provided the brains of the concern. A telegram reporting the capture might even arrive the next day from

the leader of the expedition, a well-known Young Turk officer and a cousin of Enver Bey.

Anti-Kurdish policy did not stop here. To defend themselves against Kurds, rifles had been distributed even among certain Armenian villages, two or three to each. This was a notable relaxation, in ostensible form, of the policy by which one race has been artificially held in bondage to another. But the Vali omitted to mention that several thousand rifles, of a newer pattern, had at the same time been distributed to the Kurds. Although repression of brigands was in favour, it must not be undertaken by Armenians, and he was very displeased with the latter for joining in the repression of Kurdish crime. They had killed a well-known bully of the same type as those pursued by the authorities, but as a result, twenty Armenian villagers were under lock and key.

We went on to speak of Kurdish institutions, the *Hamidie* cavalry, the privileged *Ashirat* families, and their relation to the *rayah*, the traditional Turkish term (meaning cattle) for Christian peasants. But first the Vali pulled us up. "Les rayahs n'existent pas. C'est un mauvais mot." Even the Turcophil Consul started.

"Depuis quand?" he asked at last, defiantly. "Depuis la constitution!"

Ugly facts being thus disposed of, we learnt that the *Hamidie* cavalry also was theoretically abolished. Of three whole regiments attached to a particular headquarters only two companies remained. Abdul Hamid's famous device for suppressing Christians and winning the loyalty of the Kurds was a thing of the past. The work of enrolment had always proved irksome to the Turkish officers charged with it. Their only hold over the new recruits lay in the desire for new rifles, and their labours never reached the stage of training. Even uniforms were seldom distributed, and no regiment was paraded with further harmony of dress than that afforded by the metal *Hamidie* badge (which had given the *Hamidie* the title of the "tin-plate men").

It is true that Kurdish troops had been tried before, but had never been of use to the Turks. When employed in war, they notoriously failed to fight, breaking into demoralized groups when attacked. In the Russo-Turkish War they robbed the Turkish cavalry regiment in which they enrolled. The Vali was glad, he said, to be rid of a nuisance. It is only fair to add that

we subsequently met many Kurds who knew nothing of this theoretical disbandment, and proudly claimed to be not only *Ashirat*, but *Hamidie* cavalrymen.

The privilege denoted by the term *Ashirat* was much debated. An immense proportion of Kurdish families claimed a customary and hereditary right of immunity from taxation, and, in effect, of any responsibility to Government or society (the Vali would have said "to God or man"). They recognized only their immediate chief; often a mere squireen at war with neighbours equally petty. The Sultan attempted to alter this state of affairs by demanding military service in exchange for immunity from taxation, but failed. As the Vali had plaintively stated, the *Ashirat* had ceased to serve and had not begun to pay. It appeared that sometimes only the landowners were *Ashirat*; the French Consul was eloquent on this point, urging that their villagers were *Kurd-rayah*—serfs who suffered even more than Christians. There were, he insisted, Kurdish peasants who had no privileges and were bullied by their greater compatriots. But the Vali contradicted him. In many districts, he said, an Agha's dependents were all *Ashirat*, as well as his family; and in any case, many

OUR KURDISH HOST

chiefs claimed judicial powers, the whole of their villagers, mostly armed, denying the right of the Turkish judge to punish or try them. The Consul found fault with this "feudalism". In his argument, one further discerned a modernist revolt against economic feudalism as we know it in the West; but his first grievance was against the Agha's claim to feudalism in its old judicial form, and at this point the Turk and the Christian tended to agree. For the Turkish Ministers of War and Finance, much of Eastern Anatolia remained a thorn in the flesh. If you admired the flaunted pistol-holder of a tattered ruffian in a village crowd, you found the pistol to be a modern magazine repeater. He proudly observed: "I am *Ashirat.*" He would neither pay taxes nor serve in the army.

The latest "Kurdish movement" towards unity was often discussed, but few took it seriously. The German Consul at Van, indeed, was keen to learn our opinion of Russia's assumed activity in promoting it. It was natural that to German eyes in those days the matter should look serious. To the rival aspirant "omne ignotum pro magnifico". But a real Kurdish movement must be almost as difficult as was

its counterpart in Albania. Differences of dialect and religion are almost equally great—the heretical Kizilbashis (said by some to number one-third of the Kurds) being hated by the Sunni Turks almost as if they were Christians, and much more than the Catholic Albanians were hated by the Moslems. Internal strife is equally traditional. Above all, the absence of a written language precludes the spread of ideas, without which unity is meaningless. Till 1913 no Kurdish newspaper ever appeared at Stamboul, and small wonder, for it could not be printed in Kurdish. To reach the Kurds, the Bible Society printed the Scriptures in Armenian characters. A section of Armenians had attempted to work with the new Kurdish movement, but the memory of past strife was an obstacle to co-operation, and moreover the movement was aristocratic, inspired by the fear of losing feudal privileges—which were themselves one of the chief scourges of the Armenian.

When contemplating the Kurds, one feels that it is indeed a cruel fate that has so debased the fundamental gold of human nature. The combination of ignorance with lawless power has ruined their soul. It produces an evil greater in reality than the trouble they give to their

neighbours. The poorer villages are a scene of rags (too scanty to seem worth wearing) and scowling, repellent faces. A settlement of Australian aborigines contains more smiles and laughter. I have never seen children knock down smaller ones with such vicious pleasure. The very chief who entertained you was rude, so that it was with no compunction that in parting with one of these, who happened to prefer eating with his fingers, we selected for our parting present a knife and fork. He had the same evening boasted to our interpreter that if the Christians in his country obtained reforms, he and his men would "kill them all in two hours".

To those who have not studied it, the Kurdish situation is hard to describe because it is unique. Albania itself, incredibly wild as it was before the War (though close to the heart of Europe), was not so strange.

In default of comparisons which accurately convey the situation, there was one which frequently occurred to me. The Kurdish herdsman ranges over land very like that of his confrère the Australian squatter. Both are averse to intruding agriculturists. Both can do without them. The difference is this. Australian Govern-

ments insist that lands fit for farming shall be farmed. But the Kurdish squatter is a government himself, and insists that they shall not. He tolerates an occasional village, where the land would support twenty: when so disposed he takes the village for his own people; the rest he destroys.

In civilized countries landlords profit by prosperous tenants, self-interest providing a guarantee, imperfect though it be, of enlightened estate-management. But in the case of the Kurd it is inoperative, because he has the standard of comfort of a gipsy. Where the standard is rising, however, there is some hope, as the following apocryphal story will indicate. A young Kurd, son of a chief who had indulged in massacre, was seen with the peasants learning to plough. The father remonstrated against the indignity of such work. The son replied: "When you have killed all the Christians, we shall have to work, or starve."

We finally left Turkey for Russia in one of the small carriages of the country. As we neared the frontier and were passing a ravine, our driver said: "There is the spot where the Kurds robbed us the last time I passed here." The facts were as follows: Five Kurds were attacking

a traveller when a European Consul, returning to his post, came within sight. His escort consisted of four Turkish gendarmes and two regulars. Three Kurds galloped off; two were surrounded; the Consul drove up and told the soldiers to disarm the Kurds. What was his surprise to find that the traveller was a Turkish Prefect. Till security arrived he had concealed his identity, and his protest was now raised, not against the robbers, but against the danger of asking Kurds to give up their rifles. The Consul insisted, and the men were taken to Van gaol. Their demand for an early release was granted.

Only a year before my visit a British Consul was himself attacked by Kurds and compelled to fight a miniature battle. The Consul shot straighter than the Kurds, and thus saved his life.

To his neighbours, the Kurd was, no doubt, an unmitigated curse. But to the traveller he remained a picturesque and welcome presence. He alone, in those vast and arid spaces, supplied a touch of colour and romance. I shall never forget how, pursuing our monotonous way, a brilliant apparition suddenly confronted us. It was a young chief and his wife sitting

together astride a restive horse with erect confidence and ease; the man with a rifle across his saddle; the lady in long yellow jacket and pantaloons of purple velvet, the face surmounted by a lofty head-dress which recalled the Canterbury Pilgrims—truly as splendid a couple as this drab modern world can show.

THE CHANGING NEAR EAST

CHAPTER II

THE CHANGING NEAR EAST

MY FIRST VISIT to the Balkans was by order of the doctor, who urged me to cure an affection of the throat by a visit to sunny lands. The Riviera would be boring and Italy familiar. I saw a chance of novelty. The maps of Europe showing how the tangled railways of Austria-Hungary suddenly ceased to the South, and only a single attenuated line ran on, piercing the whole Balkan peninsula, had long roused me to wonder why lands so near should be so untrodden. Greece, still unreachable except by sea, and European Turkey satisfied the doctor's insistence on sun. I made for Athens, rode across the Peloponnese, and returning by Constantinople, Sofia, and Nisch, secured some rough travel in Macedonia and that part of Turkey which was then called Old Serbia.

It is amazing to think that less than twenty years ago the sway of a Mahomedan Power extended so far into Christian Europe as to hold the key to the Adriatic Sea. Even to-day, with the Turk out of Europe, Westernism is

far from having conquered this turbulent corner of Europe: it still largely remains "the East", and if the intending traveller makes haste, he will still in this generation enjoy many of the charms of the Middle Ages in the Balkans, where gorgeous national dress may confront him in the villages, and where the flowing robe of the Mahomedan Mullah and the long hair of the Orthodox priest will excite his interest in the streets.

In the days before the War, the liberated fractions of the Balkan races, once in the front of civilization, long enslaved but already partly free, played with their new constitutions like children with a toy, and with a similar result—the toy got broken. On my first visit to Belgrade I made the acquaintance of two members of the Ministry: on my next visit I was hoping to meet them, but I was laughed at for my simplicity; they had gone where ministers naturally go—one was in prison, the other in exile.

But the vagaries of politics were only the froth on the surface; there was a deep current of happiness and prosperity following on the release from bondage. The ancient monasteries,

always the symbol of national hopes but often robbed and ruined in the days of the captivity, were now the scene of such festive happiness as the West knows no longer. At Studenitsa, 10,000 people gathered to celebrate the Virgin's birthday. At Rilo, 7,000 pilgrims slept in the galleries and the five hundred rooms of the monastery itself. They were all the guests of the monastery; the monastic cook, with his wooden spoon, six feet long, serving out dinners from a copper saucepan large enough to contain the meat of two oxen together. Religious festivals, as formerly in the West, were the occasion of commercial fairs; the fair, again, attracted the whole race of mirth-providers; dancing occupied the evening, and there might still be seen the blind minstrels of Homeric type, singing of national glories, long passed, to the strains of the one-stringed guitar. Neither was religion forgotten; at 5 a.m. the monks began to say Mass, and at daybreak you hardly found standing-room in the chapel. Round its colonnade were pictures showing the sufferings of the wicked in another world; those of brigands seemed to attract most attention, and the abbot would tell you that these needed no apology—it was the only way to teach the

illiterate peasant. Life seemed here so far from the Western world that when one learned that in this chapel was held a memorial service at Mr. Gladstone's death, one felt surprised that they had ever heard of him.

Round the villages there is often a large common, covered in autumn with broad sheets of the purple crocus; here grazed the village herd of dun-coloured cattle, each beast finding its own way in the evening to its master's house in the village street. In this meadow on Sunday afternoon the village gathered for the *horo*, or national dance. A circle of dancers formed round the fiddler (or, if it be in Bulgaria, the piper), and whether the number in the circle was six or a hundred, no Western party could compete with it for vigour and mirth. In Bulgaria, you might meet the school-children led by the schoolmaster, obeying the statutory order to take his pupils on Sunday afternoon for a natural history ramble. For the politician, too, there were cheering sights. If he reflected on the puzzles of religious education in England, he would be cheered by the splendid achievement of the Austrian Government in Bosnia. Thirty years before, Moslem, Roman Catholic, and Greek Catholic lived in perpetual and blood-

stained feud; now their children sat together in the school; the rival clerics collected their followers in different rooms during the hour of religious teaching; and then the rival sectarians gathered again for playtime in the school-yard.

In these liberated countries the tourist could travel with perfect safety; the Government would, indeed, offer him a gendarme for escort, and he would be well advised to take him; but not so much to ward off brigands as to shoot fierce dogs, such as killed, in this very land, Euripides; or if the traveller was benighted at some village where the appearance of the inn suggested that the vermin would be beyond endurance, the gendarme would justify his pay by demanding the hospitality of the best house in the village. Brigandage had almost disappeared, but I plead guilty to fear on one occasion in Bulgaria; it was just after the capture of an American lady by Bulgarian rebels (in Turkish Macedonia), who were holding her to ransom. The lady was reported to be concealed in the very monastery to which we were travelling; and a Bulgarian paper of the district had reported that my friend and I were setting out to ransom her, carrying £25,000

in our pockets. Considering the temptation, it spoke well for the Bulgarian Government that no violent hands were laid upon us.

The dominions of the Sultan had their charms also for holiday-making; the mountains were beautiful, the tattered escort was picturesque, and Orientals were often amusing. Before setting out for the Balkans I told the Turkish Ambassador in London that I was going in search of health, and in particular for an affection of the throat; the Ambassador quaintly replied: "It is not a very good place for throats." That was no doubt the case for the subjects of the Sultan, but for the European traveller it was safe enough; and whether it be from the open-air life, or from the total absence of luxury, I found it most exhilarating.

To cross the Turkish frontier was always an event. It marked the boundary of European civilization. The passage from one world to another was immediately signalized by the mouldering Custom-house and the tattered uniform. One entered a world of squalor, and one saw the truth contained in the proverb: "Where the Turkish foot treads the grass never grows." Where the Turk had disappeared, houses

were rebuilt and roads were made, yet nothing beautiful was destroyed, for there was none to destroy, except the minarets, which usually remained; the new eaves were wider and the roads shadier, and orchards relieved the brown monotony of the Turkish waste. Entering Turkey you left both prosperity and beauty at once. The poverty of some parts was so great that, when I entered Kossovo from Serbia, the Governor sent a message begging me to bring carriages from Serbia if I wanted them, as there were none available in his country.

There was always a glorious uncertainty about what would happen at the frontier; one man was turned back and had his journey nipped in the bud; another was arrested on the suspicion of being an agitator. Every item of our luggage was strewn on the floor, and our books, when the official had pretended to read them, usually holding them upside down, would be taken from us. On one occasion, by way of experiment, we took with us a copy of the Koran and an anti-Turkish pamphlet; the Turk returned to us the pamphlet, but declined to pass the Koran—his own national Bible. He could read neither, and we told him the nature of the book. He then expressed regret that he

could not allow us to take the Koran; but, reflecting that we might reward him with a bribe, he added that if we would go back into Bosnia and post the book from there to our destination in Turkey, he would allow it to pass, as he was not ordered to examine the post. This was done, and the Sultan's commands thus duly obeyed.

In Turkey there was not much pleasure to be derived from the contemplation of happiness or of beauty, except where Nature had been left untouched; but there was humour, though the humour generally brought its inconvenience. A bear-hunting party in the mountains was decidedly quaint. Our host, the European manager of a mine in which the villagers worked, entertained us in a battlemented castle, from which he never stirred without a rifle. He began by giving orders that every villager should be ready at 4 a.m. to go out and beat the forest; the penalty for refusal would be a flogging. Arrived at the shooting-ground he posted us for the drive, and begged us, if we saw any man whom we did not know to be one of the beaters, to shoot him without delay, in case by chance he should be a brigand. We demurred to the chance of shooting an honest peasant;

A SERBIAN WEDDING PROCESSION

but this, he said, mattered nothing; the mayor of the village himself would at the most cost £20. When we finally left the village he implored us not to let our intention be known, because we should certainly be kidnapped, and he proceeded, as a measure of precaution, to order all the villagers off to the forest in another direction for a bear hunt, which was not really to take place. Having thus put people off the scent, he rose at three o'clock next morning and helped us to get off before the village was awake.

One of the strangest things in Turkey was the contempt with which the Turks were treated by some of their so-called subjects. At Novibazar, in Old Serbia, the Albanians amused themselves by jostling the Turkish Prefect as he was showing me the town. These men wore ragged white clothes and had their heads shaven, except for a long tag of hair at the back, which gave them an amazingly savage appearance; they all carried rifles, even the boys, as soon as they could bear the weight of a Martini. When I was at Mitrovitza, they had recently broken open the prison, driven away the Turkish troops, and expelled the Russian Consul. A dense crowd of them were gathered

at our departure from Novibazar, and seemed inclined to practise their rifles on the suspected stranger. The impotence of the Turkish Governor was both pathetic and humorous, but I must admit that I was extremely relieved to be out of the crowd. At Prishtina they had murdered the Serbian Consul, while the buildings of the tobacco monopoly, which the Turks had attempted to establish, had served to provide them with a bonfire. A certain Suliman Pasha, the Albanian notable of the place, quite overshadowed the Turkish Governor. Recently he had celebrated his daughter's wedding, at which three thousand of his Albanian compatriots attended with their rifles. The feasting lasted for a week, and we were invited to one of the banquets. An Albanian dinner, where you have to sit on the floor, tear up roast ducks with your hands, and consume innumerable courses without intermission, is always a painful trial. If you stop for an instant your host will avenge himself by forcing upon you an even larger portion. Your sufferings are vastly increased by having to sit cramped upon the floor. Besides, at such a meal only one glass is provided, and a servant who carries it, with the jug of water, brings it to the guest who wishes to drink; the

terrible choice has therefore to be made between eating ten large courses without any drink, and enduring the horror of sharing the vessel with your greasy companions.

The solemnity of calling on a Turk, with its inevitable programme of coffee, cigarette, and jam with water, its slow repetition of hypocritical compliments and renewed cigarettes, was amusing to a newcomer. It was especially so at that extraordinary spot (the Sanjak of Novibazar) where the Austrians then had a garrison in Turkish territory. The Austrian general took us to the Pasha and discoursed on the excellent roads and bridges which his Excellency the Pasha had built. I supposed that, as usual, there were no roads; but I had not realized the pungency of Austrian wit. We learnt afterwards that there was a road and even a bridge, but both had been built by the Austrians. The sting lay in the fact that no bridge in the district was ever maintained by the Turks. The only other bridge that I saw was not Turkish, but Roman; it would have been, however, none the less welcome, but that the river had changed its course and no longer ran under the bridge.

Austrian humour went to even greater lengths. On the bare limestone hills surrounding

the town they had written in huge letters, formed of white stones, the monogram of the Austrian Kaiser side by side with the Crescent, and they discoursed to the Turks of the charming effect produced by the illumination of these emblems on the Kaiser's birthday.

If the company of a Mahomedan became oppressive, you could generally remove him by producing some article condemned by Mahomed, such as ham or bacon, but the old piety was breaking down and the decay of fanaticism had its bad side in the growing popularity of the bottle. My friend and I engaged a Mahomedan dragoman and started out one day with a modest lunch, chiefly of ham and whisky, with some suitable viands for the true believer; we produced the ham bashfully, out of regard for his feelings, but to our disgust he displayed a liking for ham equalling our own, with an appetite twice as voracious. He explained that though a Turk he was a Liberal. We afterwards crossed the boundary into a Christian State (where a Turk might be unpopular), and found to our astonishment that our friend had hidden his fez, produced an English cap from his pocket, and become a Christian. After this he changed his religion

no less than three times, avoiding awkward consequences with great skill, except once, when he found it convenient to join with us in declaring himself a Protestant, and found himself, to his dismay, completely cornered by an inquisitive Greek monk, who demanded to know the Protestant view of the Virgin Mary.

A Turkish inn was frequently little more than a range of rotting shanties surrounding a manure heap, so that the traveller would probably choose a room looking on to the open street, and get as near to the open window as he could. At one place, however, we were not allowed even this luxury; the officer of the escort politely requested us to keep to the other end of the room, and proceeded to put screens across the windows, explaining that the Albanians resented the presence of foreign travellers and might take the opportunity of shooting them from the street through the window. At the same place, on leaving the room I fell over the prostrate form of one of the escort; they had had orders not to let us leave their sight, and being sleepy, he had stretched himself across the door. At another place we were very anxious to learn the opinions of a Christian merchant on whom we were

quartered; the problem was how to shake off the escort. It was impossible to do so ourselves, so we proposed to go for a walk in the town (which would compel the escort to go with us) and to leave our interpreter for a talk with the merchant, which he might afterwards report to us. But the Christians implored us to desist; it was as much as their liberty was worth even to talk to the interpreter. Their fears were not baseless; two days after we had left the place, and were staying with the Serbian Consul elsewhere, a message reached him that a schoolmaster, who had been speaking to our servant (albeit in the presence only of the escort), had been arrested and thrown into prison.

Only on one occasion did we rid ourselves of our escort; we were spending the night at a small mountain farm, and the farmer had shown his appreciation by killing one of his herd of swine, which was roasted whole for our benefit over a wood fire. The captain of the escort was fortunately a pious Moslem, so that when the pig was brought in he fled, and we found ourselves for the first time left alone with the Christians. The Serbian Consul, who was with us, and who would have means of veri-

fying statements, seized the opportunity of asking the farmer how things were going on. He replied that the Albanians had demanded from him a ransom of £30, and that as he could not possibly pay, he would be obliged to fly across the frontier into Serbia and abandon all his property. He asked advice from the Consul as to how he was to provide for his wife, his mother, and his children. He added that his father and his uncle had been murdered by the Albanians. The Consul then inquired, by way of verification, where the murder had taken place; the farmer immediately answered, "It was in this room", and he then pointed out two bullet-marks in the wall.

In Uskub the Serbian bishop was very anxious to hear about the English stage, and added: "Here we have no theatre, but we are noted for our tragedies." The statement was confirmed by an incident which took place a few days afterwards. A Bulgarian girl had been stolen by a Turk, and her brother begged the Russian Consul to give her refuge if she was rescued. The Consul was so far satisfied of the facts that he did so, and sent the girl, with his wife, to Bulgaria. Soon afterwards the brother was found with his throat cut close to the Turk's

house. Several Christians (but not the Turk) were thereupon arrested, and there, as usual, things ended. A friend of ours was appealed to by a Christian woman in our presence for advice, because the village gendarme had expelled her husband and taken her into his house, but had now gone away, leaving her in trouble and unprovided for. At another village it was significant that the schoolmaster replied to our inquiries that all was quiet, they were very happy; but when asked for details, he said that the Turkish sergeant had closed the inn every evening because the innkeeper's wife had refused his advances; but he had not thought such things worth mentioning. He added that he had also been beaten himself, but he did not know why. This reminded me of an Armenian guide at Constantinople, who said that he had not suffered by the massacres; and when I asked him if none of his relations had been killed, he replied: "Oh, yes, one of my brothers was killed, but only one."

The most tragic situation existed in Turkish Albania, where the Albanian population was mixed with the Serbian. Here, in addition to the hardships of Turkish government, the defenceless Christians were at the mercy of

CELEBRATING THE TURKISH REVOLUTION

wild clansmen, more brutal and more active than the Turks, forming, in practice, a class of licensed brigands, respecting no authority, and compared with whom even the Turk was a friend. The governor of this district, though strongly anti-Christian, made some attempt to keep up the semblance of Turkish law and order; but the Sultan had an Albanian guard, and his personal safety demanded that the Albanians should be humoured, so the unhappy governor was transferred to Tripoli, whither his secretary had preceded him, having made himself suspected of treasonable radicalism by importing a bicycle.

In the same part of Albania I was breakfasting one day, with one of the consuls, when a dishevelled and miserable Serbian monk arrived; he had been in charge of a monastery; some Albanians had arrived, plundered the monastery, and promised him a bullet if he did not go. The great monastery of Detchane, one of the historic and sacred memorials of the Serbian Empire, had often been plundered by tribes over whom Turkish authority was absolutely powerless. I met, also, an aged priest, who was driven to carry a revolver and a Martini rifle himself, so often had he been attacked; he

was anxious to explain that for this irregularity he had a licence from the Bishop of Prisrend.

During the previous summer there had been open war between the Turkish authority and an Albanian chief, who objected to the establishment of a Russian consulate, and raised his tribesmen in rebellion. Three years before I had visited this gentleman's castle; it was a lofty stone building with walls three feet thick, an iron door, windows with stone shutters, and loopholes for rifles. The strangest part of the establishment was a small monastery, which, though a Mahomedan, he had founded close to the castle, and in which he kept an unfortunate monk of the Greek Church, compelling him to do his bidding on a starvation wage.

It was a rare opportunity which those days afforded to visit a relic of the Moslem flood that two centuries before had overwhelmed Europe till stemmed at the walls of Vienna. Though brought to our doors by the Orient Express, it was as unexplored as Afghanistan. Yet those Englishmen who seized the fleeting privilege could be counted on the fingers. Never again will such remoteness be within the compass of a month's holiday. The Balkan

War and the Great War brought it to a final end.

But while the street red with fezes will be seen no more, the clash between East and West becomes, in some respects, more marked as Western methods impose themselves. Where the Balkan peoples attempt to leap unprepared into the twentieth century, the resulting incongruities are sometimes very diverting. A general election, difficult to work even in a country where democracy has reached a high level of competence, in some Balkan States is a *sujet pour rire*. Lawless habits still remain, a relic of life as it was under the Turk. Even the floor of Parliament does not provide a sanctuary. Prime Ministers are hunted to death, and Parliamentary leaders are shot down in the Council Chamber.

Yet progress, which was unknown for four centuries, is now continuous. The resuscitation of the liberated peoples is far more remarkable than the relics of their long slavery. The future is full of hope. Industry and education advance daily. Deeds of violence may attract attention, but the capacity to revive is the really notable fact.

MOUNTAINEERING IN JAPAN

CHAPTER III

MOUNTAINEERING IN JAPAN

IT WAS THE MONTH OF MAY when, with two English friends and a Japanese servant, I left the railway station of Kioto, the ancient capital.

A few hours brought us to Gifu, a town which had suffered terribly in an earthquake two years before, most of the houses being destroyed. Here and there a roof was still to be seen resting on the ground, eloquent of the scourge from which Japan suffers so terribly, and in freedom from which we in England are so fortunate. In that sudden catastrophe, 10,000 people were killed; 120,000 houses were overturned; railway embankments and lines were demolished; forests slipped down the hills; and fields changed their size and shape.

Here at Gifu the school-house fell with the rest; but such is the passion for learning in Japan, that the children formed voluntary schools in the open air and appointed teachers from among themselves. The thirst for education is amazing. I have seen Japanese coolies, on a Queensland sugar-plantation, working at geometry

without a teacher in the evenings, while to learn English speech and English writing was regarded as the most obvious pastime for the scanty hours of leisure.

Immediately on leaving the railway, we had to dispute with the police as to whether our passports provided for travel in the particular province we wished to visit. It was the policy of the Government to compel other nations to revise the treaties by making passport rules disagreeable. Though providing for the thirteen provinces visible from Fuji, our passports were held not to apply to another province from which, as we contended and afterwards proved, Fuji could be seen. The policeman's somewhat natural objection might have nipped our journey in the bud had not my companion been the most accomplished traveller in Japan, the Rev. Walter Weston, the well-known mountaineer and writer. Suffice it to say that at last the police are pacified, *jinrikshas* and coolies engaged, and we speed along the Nakasendo, the great mountain road from Kioto to Tokio. Almost at once we come on a marvellous sight. In a forest of scattered pines the grass is full of short pink azaleas, growing as thick as bluebells or primroses in an English wood. Like

level clouds of sunset colour below a heavy sky, they lie in broad stretches beneath the dark foliage.

At night we reach the village of Ota, and thoroughly enjoy that invaluable institution, the *yadoya*, or village inn. Its wide-eaved verandah abuts on the village street, from which the rooms within are visible. Leaving our shoes at the entrance, we mount the raised and matted floor, and meet the host and hostess, who prostrate themselves on all fours, touching the ground with their foreheads between each remark. The host entreats, "Honourably deign to accept the use of my dirty hovel", and then ushers us into a scrupulously clean guest-room, looking on to the back garden, a paradise of miniature landscapes. The room is innocent of the smallest attempt at furniture, but the advent of a foreigner and his luggage soon litters it with confusion.

At such an inn it is the privilege of the first-arrived traveller to take first turn at the hot bath, without which no evening would be complete. It is a wooden vessel some three feet square, with a stove underneath, placed at the back of the house next the yard or garden, and surrounded by paper screens. The village

idlers will probably be gathered to view the stranger in his bath; and even if the screen should be unbroken, he will soon be aroused from fancied security by a shuffling outside the screens, then by the appearance of a finger through the paper, and finally of an eye applied to the hole. He will soon realize the notions of the country and cease to be annoyed.

After the bath comes the hostess, bringing dainty bowls of soup, fish, eggs, and rice, with chopsticks in a hand-painted envelope. These are supplemented with advantage by viands brought with us, and (not least important) a knife and spoon. After dinner, the leading villagers will probably drop in for a chat with the hairy barbarians, and music (of a kind) may be had for the asking. When bedtime comes, quilts are piled on the floor, another rolled up makes a pillow, and nothing is lacking to make a comfortable night.

Formerly, the *kago*, or palanquin, and the *niguruma*, or two-wheeled cart, were the only carriages available, but now *jinrikshas* are the universal conveyance. They are drawn, for a long journey, by two runners harnessed tandem; but the day we left Ota we decided to escape the extortions of *jinriksha*-men by chartering

a horse-carriage. The native carriage, or *basha*, is a minute wagonette, with wooden awning or roof supported on iron posts. Three Englishmen can hardly be compressed into its interior, though the seats are intended for six Japanese. An emaciated pony was fastened to the shafts by odd pieces of leather and string, an old ignoramus with shaven head held the reins, while a small boy tootled, from the step behind, on a tin horn, to announce that everything was up to date.

A *jinriksha*-man can be roused to greater speed by encouraging cries; in the *basha*, both driver and horse were dead to enthusiasm, so that our progress was slow. But we got on fairly well for several miles, till, passing through a narrow village street, suddenly the roof of the carriage collided with the widely-overhanging eave of a wayside cottage. There was a crash; a lifting of the front of the carriage; a rending of timbers; and finally a complete separation of the two halves of the vehicle—the horse walking on with the shafts and forewheels, while the body toppled backward and was left standing upright, with the occupants enclosed. But Japanese ingenuity is great, and we were able to proceed on our journey, not, however,

without the help of a native sash, tied with string round the horse's tail to do duty as a crupper.

The *basha* and its humours were soon renounced for *jinrikshas*, and at last, after some hours of alpine scenery, with snow-clad peaks and chalet-like houses, whose roofs were weighted with heavy stones to secure them against wind, we reached our goal, the village of Nakatsugawa, from which it appeared that a certain peak could be climbed, never yet trodden by European foot.

Though the village was poor and remote, the garden of our inn, about eight yards square, afforded a landscape containing trees and shrubs, miniature hills and streams, a waterfall, a lake with fish, a water-wheel, and woodland paths. Looking on to this charming prospect, with a verandah between, was the room allotted to us. Beauty and interest are never failing in these country hostelries. At the time of my visit they were often shops as well, and in such an inn I have seen the strangest articles for sale, among them dried bats and lizards, which were highly prized as medicine for the pains of children. Some people still preferred the doctors of the old Chinese school, with their quaint

beliefs in pricking and burning the skin, to the modern scientific men; adherents of the former school still held that essence of lizard or bat was a safe cure for cholera, sunstroke, diphtheria, liver-ache, and poisonous inflammations.

The ascent of Enasan, at whose base lies Nakatsugawa, had not yet been made by Europeans, and was now undertaken by my companion with a view to the next edition of *Murray's Guide-Book*. Hence my good fortune in sharing the honours.

After a wet day, during which we picked up information about the mountain, the next morning saw us on the move at six o'clock. Leaving the village and crossing the ricefields that surround it, we found a cloudless sky to greet us, and such a faultless day as so often in Japan rewards the traveller for his patience during a wet one. Near the mountain's foot we passed the *Enajinsha*, or shrine of the mountain Enasan. Here live the guardian priests; but the season for pilgrims was not yet, and no help is given to climbers till the summer, when the snow has melted and the mountain is formally thrown open. So we were lucky to pick up a coolie who had been up Enasan, and

could help to carry our things. These were heavy, for we were prepared to camp out. Soon the ridge became so steep that we ascended 1,100 feet in half an hour, and were 4,000 feet above the sea. A break in the trees afforded a view of steep well-wooded slopes falling down to a noisy torrent, while in front rose the main mass of the peak, with streaks of snow in the gullies or showing through the dark trees near the summit, and over the shoulder appeared far away the snow-clad cone of a giant mountain. The foreground of large white azaleas, growing under the trees with dwarf bamboo around them, the roaring of torrents, and the soft cooing of doves combined with the distant view to produce a charm which banished from my memory the painful labours of the ascent.

At 5,500 feet we reached snow, and were soon plunging up to the knees, and often to the waist, for we were walking on a level with the branches of the pine-trees, whose lower stems were buried, and the snow was getting soft with spring sunshine. At last the summit, 7,350 feet high, was reached, and we found a glorious reward for the six hours' climb. The great ranges and peaks stood round

us to the north from west to east, under snows still undiminished by summer heat. There were Haku-san, Yarigatake (the spear peak), the smoking Asamayama, the Shiranesan ridge, and others to the due east, over which peeped the flattened cone of Fuji herself, sixty miles away. To the south was a softer expanse of lower wooded hills, among which could be traced two of the greatest rivers in Japan, forcing their way through narrow gorges, here divided only by a single range, but destined to reach the Pacific eighty miles apart. They looked like silver threads below, so high above them were we.

Most enchanting was the prospect, and it was long before we could bring our attention to the nearer attractions of a pilgrim's shrine, in which the ways and thoughts of men displayed a more quaint, if less beautiful, field of study. It was a wooden structure, with small images covered by an open roof. In front of the images was a table or altar, on which lay several coins, and some knives offered by criminals who had used them in a way which needed expiation. Pilgrimages and offerings are a favourite form in which the penitent seeks forgiveness and purity.

Strange superstitions linger in these distant

spots. On many mountains these shrines are held specially sacred, and Ontakegan is the scene of weird incantations, exorcisms of evil spirits, and ceremonies which resemble "consulting the oracle", when the medium, having thrown himself into a trance, obtains answers from the spirit of the mountain to any question which the pilgrims wish to propound. Possession by foxes is a common belief in many parts, or (in places where there are no foxes) possession by badgers, as in the island of Shikoku. There the badger walks by moonlight on his hind legs, distends his stomach, and drums upon it with his forefeet, producing such celestial music that those who meet him fall enchanted under his spells.

Again the view demanded our attention, and what with satisfying the needs of the inner man, three hours had all too quickly passed when we tore ourselves from the spot, not insensible of the fact that, though known to vast numbers of Japanese pilgrims, to us, first among Europeans, had fallen the delight of this, perhaps the finest, panorama to be seen in Japan.

It was dark when we reached flat ground again, and most welcome was the hospitality

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of an ancient farm-house, where beast and man enjoyed the same roof. Here that excellent beverage, *tamagozake*, a warm concoction of eggs and rice wine, revived us for the rest of the way. Eggs form the staple native food which a foreigner can rely on, a fact which we soon keenly realized, for next morning, when we left Nakatsugawa, and made the customary offering of "tea money", our bill, for the keep of four men during less than three days, included an item for one hundred and forty eggs.

I must pass all too rapidly over the day, during which we crossed the range into the next valley, by the Misakatoge pass, of which nothing was known by Europeans and very little could be learnt from Japanese. Suffice it to say that the view of a deep valley between wooded mountains, with a dashing river shining green along its wide bed of white stones, seen through a dazzling foreground of pink and white azaleas, was one whose beauty I have never seen surpassed.

Near the village of Sonohara we came on a small shrine, whose majestic surroundings seemed more worthy of Nikko or Nara. An immense cryptomeria stood on either side of it,

and one of these, at 5 feet from the ground, measured 26 feet in girth.

At a little hamlet, where peach, cherry, and pear were still in blossom, the people, usually so excited at seeing a foreigner, seemed quite unconcerned. We sent our native servant to ask one of them what they thought we were, and he reported this reply: "They are from a distant part of Japan, where the people grow to gigantic size", and one old woman, on hearing that we were foreigners, remarked: "That is impossible. There are no dwellers outside the land of Great Japan."

It was not till after one o'clock at night that we knocked at the outer shutters (for there are no doors) of an inn by the river-bank. The household were fast asleep; but in a few moments master and servants were welcoming us as if they had been longing for our arrival. "Deign to let me wash your honourable feet"; "Please allow us to make hot food for you"; "How kind of you to honour our miserable house", were phrases showered upon us with many smiles and every possible attention. This politeness, so impossible to a European when rudely awakened at dead of night, was the more remarkable as many Japanese believe that

the spirit leaves the body during sleep and wanders afar in the shape of a small black ball, and that, if the body is suddenly roused, the soul may be too late to rejoin it, and death will result. These people whom we rudely disturbed might well have shown resentment, but they concealed it. As in other matters where the Japanese seemed to us to outshine Europeans, they lived up to their maxim, *Warau kado-ni-wa Fuku Kitaru*—"He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast."

Our two days' hard walking were now to be rewarded by a surfeit of delightful ease. Shooting the rapids of fast rivers is a pleasant diversion from mountain-climbing. It is less laborious and more exciting, and as it is combined, on the Tenriugawa river, with splendid scenery, the descent of that river is an expedition to be made if possible. For the first half of the ninety-mile journey (which takes altogether ten hours) the long flat-bottomed boat speeds swiftly down a constant succession of races and rapids, its bottom being flat and thin, and so built as to bend without breaking if it touches a sunken rock. Each time that we approach

a rapid, the oarsmen, of whom there are four, standing up with long oars, strike the gunwale of the boat. The sound re-echoes from the cliffs on each side of the narrow gorge, and is designed to call gods and men to attention. Soon the current's speed increases; we plunge headlong into a seething cauldron of boiling waters; right in front is a cliff, from which we apparently cannot escape; the boatmen paddle fast and deftly; a single false motion and we are lost; the waves dash over the gunwale; but in much less time than these words have taken to write we are gliding along a smooth current and almost into the next rapid.

In the intervals of calm water there is all too little time to scan the glorious cliffs that rise from the river for hundreds of feet almost straight to the skies, and are nevertheless rich with luxuriant foliage. They, in themselves, would amply repay us for our journey. Pine and maple almost hide the precipitous rock, here in sunlight and there in deepest shade, while right over the river hang festoons of pale-blue wisteria, sometimes smothering whole trees.

Not least among the day's marvels was the astounding skill of our native cook, who, with no further appliance than a small brass frame, a

few pieces of charcoal, and a frying-pan, produced choice dishes till forbidden to cook any more.

After six or seven hours through this deep and narrow cleft in the mountain mass, the cliffs began insensibly to slope, and on the shelving shores the signs of human life appeared. Here and there a boat was being pulled, sailed, or punted, or all three at once, against the strong current. We came down the ninety miles in ten hours, but it takes ten days and more to get back up the river. Who but the most plucky and patient of men would use such torrents for navigation?

As we neared the sea twilight fell, and it was dark when we reached the great railway bridge which spans the river near its mouth, and found ourselves once more in the busy world.

Who can feel himself worthy to speak of Fuji, the loveliest mountain in the world; the idol of poets for centuries; the inspiration of painters; and, one must almost say, the trade-mark of Japan? Japanese tradition affirms that Fuji sprang from the earth in a single night. To me, at all events, its glories sprang in a night, for we reached by train in the dark a village,

Suzukawa by name, only twenty miles from the mountain. As we lay on our beds of quilt next morning, the sliding shutters were removed, and Fuji stood right before us, framed as in a picture; but how far beyond the power of any artist to depict, much more of any writer to describe, those who have seen it know well.

Fuji is a flat-topped cone over 12,000 feet high, standing in the midst of a circular plain round which is a ring of smaller mountains. With a glorious sweep the sides rise from the chequered expanse of many-coloured fields, steeper and steeper, to the snowy summit. Rising from near the level of the sea, the effect of height is vastly enhanced. The flanks are often hidden in clouds, the level top appearing far above them. On a cloudy day the new-comer, when told to look at Fuji, often fails to detect the top. Such was the experience of the travellers described by Lafcadio Hearn as looking from the deck of their ship on reaching Yokohama at sunrise.

"Look higher up, much higher." Then they looked up, up into the heart of the sky, and saw the mighty summit glistening like a wondrous phantom lotus-bud in the flush of the coming day; a spectacle that smote them dumb. Swiftly the eternal snow yellowed into gold, then

whitened as the sun reached out beams to it over the curve of the world, over the shadowy ranges, over the very stars, it seemed, for the giant base remained viewless. And the night fled utterly; and a soft blue light bathed all the hollow heaven—and colours awoke from sleep; and before the gazers there opened the luminous Bay of Yokohama, with the sacred peak, its base ever invisible, hanging over all like snowy ghost in the arch of the infinite day.

For this once, when I saw him first, he stood without a single cloud in the morning sun—a sight not often obtained. Soon a curious round cap of mist began to form around his head, and shortly he was hidden for the day.

In the ascent of Fuji it was my good fortune to be again accompanied by Mr. Weston, the most noted of European explorers in Japan. He had twice made the climb, once earlier in the year than any recorded ascent. This time we beat that record by two days, reaching the top on May 17th, when snow still lay over all the upper 5,000 feet. The Japanese pilgrims never ascended Fuji except between July 15th and September 10th. The summit, when the snow is gone, is simple though laborious to surmount, and is visited by over ten thousand pilgrims every summer. The ascent is nominally a religious duty, but pleasure is happily combined.

Mountaineering is perhaps a greater institution in Japan than anywhere else in the world. It is common to see parties of pilgrims, both men and women, in white coats and broad hats, with long walking-sticks, and carrying their modest luggage in small bags, tramping along the country roads. It is they who, happily for the foreigner, maintain such numbers of well-appointed village inns. Often, on the eaves of an inn, may be seen numbers of little flags bearing each an inscription. These show the names of "Pilgrim Associations", each of which has many subscribers of a small annual sum. Once a year they select by lot a few members who shall make the pilgrimage, and each Association always patronizes the same quarters. The inns are naturally anxious to display as many of these signs of patronage as possible, so as to assure other travellers that the inn is good. Hence the little flags at the inn front.

Buddhist priests maintain huts on Fuji and other sacred peaks, and posting themselves and their temple at the foot of each route, take toll of pilgrims passing upwards. In return they stamp the pilgrim's coat with a sign, which he proudly shows as a proof of piety. It is darkly hinted that for a consideration the stamp may

be obtained without the painful necessity of the climb. In order to prevent pilgrims from arriving when the priests do not wish to be on the cold hill-side, they encourage the belief that to climb on snow is displeasing to the ruling spirits of the place, and therefore dangerous; hence it was that our coolies refused to go on with us when we reached the snow.

A peaceful Sunday at Suzukawa preceded our ascent. Strolling on the beach in the afternoon, we came on a picnic party bivouacked by the sea, who urged upon us the hospitalities of baked fish and pickled seaweed. From a friendly policeman we learnt that the village boasted not only of a temple, but of a Christian church and congregation, to which he himself belonged, supporting itself without any European help. To us, just primed with the conventional report that missions had no success, the policeman's statement seemed surprising; but, indeed, the extraordinary amount of space devoted to the question in the Japanese press was sufficient proof that the number of those interested was very large.

Starting for Fuji the next morning, the first day took us through the fields, then over the grassy moors, then into the forest which clothes

the middle slopes. Here is the spot where, till lately, stood the Nionindo hut, so called because in former times women were debarred from climbing further on the sacred ground. The hut had almost completely decayed, and served to illustrate the fact that in Japan the gentle sex was proving its right to fair consideration.

The next hut, battered by the winter's storms, was anything but attractive, but rain compelled us to stop. The floor was broken, the walls full of holes, and there was no chimney to carry off the smoke of the fire which the cold obliged us to light. It was only possible to escape the smoke by squatting down with one's face near the floor; and in order to make a meal the eyes had to suffer torments. Lying down was not much better. The boards were broken and jagged, a log of wood was our only pillow, and as wraps were scarce, one had to choose between using a garment as cushion for the hip-bone and wearing it to keep out the cold. Memories of more painful nights in other lands were small consolation for our many sorrows. Without, the storm had risen, and the roar of wind and rain mingled with the long howl of a distant wolf. All night long the coolies chattered by the fire, and dried our boots so

assiduously that my companion's nailed sole was burnt through—a circumstance calculated to leave affectionate recollections of mountain coolies in general. But every evil must have an end, and we found ourselves at daybreak enjoying our chilly ablutions with sponges filled by leaving them a moment in the drenching rain—no other water was near. All that day the rain and the typhoon kept us idle, but at last, after another painful night, the sun appeared. In spite of damaged boots and coolies who refused to go farther, we made the long and weary pull through the slippery snow and the soft ashes till, after about seven hours, we looked into the great crater, and then climbed along to the icy summit, the highest position in the Land of the Rising Sun. The view recalled some great relief map, with varying tints and shades on lake and forest, river and sea, hills and plain. The crater bottom lay snowy white, but where the inner walls were too steep for snow to lodge, huge icicles hung blue against the red cliffs. Fuji has not burst forth for two centuries, but under the snow, steam still issues sufficiently hot to cook an egg, just as at Mount Tarawera, in New Zealand, you might light a stick in the summit many years after

the eruption which destroyed the famous terraces.

To turn from the deadly whiteness of the snow at our feet to gaze far and wide over the vast surrounding plain, tender green with spring life, and on to the mountains, great and small, twenty to eighty miles away, then round to the indented shore of the Pacific Ocean, was an experience which made one wonder which is more lovely, the view from the top of Fuji or the view of Fuji from below.

Our destination being Tokio we now descended by the eastern route.

Had the snow been in good condition for glissading, the upper half of the mountains would have been left behind in a few minutes, but its softness confined us to the inferior method of sliding, not on the feet, but on the back, which soon drenches one to the skin.

At last the forest was reached again, and in it, lower down, we found a solitary hermit—so he purported to be—living, he told us, on bread and water alone. To our hungry souls this announcement might have been a consolation, urging us to appreciate "low living and

high thinking", but the remains of various viands more luxurious than bread somewhat marred the picture of piety.

It was growing late when we reached a village, and my companion was suffering from an injured knee; at first chance, therefore, we obtained a horse for him to ride. The animal refused to let him mount, and then an exhibition followed of the Japanese method of horse-breaking. Our host, seizing a piece of rope, tied the beast's forelegs firmly together, and finally enveloped his head in a large cloth. Thus blinded and hobbled, he yielded to his master.

From the top we had seen, as on a map, a village we wished to reach, named Gotemba, and for this we were now making, not returning by the former route. Hence it was that, when we at length regained the land of newspapers, we found ourselves the subject of public concern. A native journal, entitled *Hochi Shimbun*, had reported us dead, and in the English newspapers at Yokohama we read as follows:

Yesterday's *Hochi* reported that two foreigners who started to ascend Fuji, with four coolies, have not since been heard of. The mountain is still covered with snow as far down as the fifth station, and as the summit was

hidden in clouds, the coolies urged the visitors to postpone the attempt. But the foreigners were determined to go. A few hours afterwards the storm burst, dislodging huge boulders and house roofs. As nothing has since been heard of the climbers, it is feared they have succumbed to the fury of the gale. Even had they taken shelter, cold and starvation must long since have rendered them helpless. Their nationality is unknown, but the *Hochi* surmises that they are British, for the reason that the people of that nation like to do that which is distasteful to them, and glory in their vigour.

A few days later a Tokio clerk remarked to my companion that it served these foreigners right to be killed. It was sacrilege to insult the spirits by climbing their sanctuary before the priests had sanctioned it.

My next expedition, though the shortest, was, scientifically, the most interesting. One morning the Tokio papers announced a fearful eruption in the north, "Explosion of a mountain, loss of many lives": and in the streets pictures were selling, showing in vivid colours the peak bursting like a bombshell, with men and beasts falling headlong below. A party was soon arranged, and we left Tokio by the early morning train, reaching Fukushima, the nearest

station to our volcano, at four o'clock that day. Twelve miles into the hills stands a little village whose name is Takaiyu, which being interpreted means, "High up hot water", so called from the hot sulphur springs round which it stands. Here we found an excellent inn, but it was a little disconcerting to find that the only bath available was a large tank open to the village street. There was nothing for it but to creep into the almost boiling water as if bathing in public, *au naturel*, was quite an everyday occurrence.

The bath was the favourite meeting-place of the whole population, and took the place of both club and public-house. At one time, in the larger towns, a police regulation ordered that, out of deference to foreign feeling on the subject, the sexes should be separated. The order was obeyed in letter, if not in spirit, and many places carried out the law by tying a piece of string across the public bath, thus separating the sexes, who continued to bathe with an easy conscience. Sometimes a floating bamboo was used, but in the village I speak of both were discarded, and certainly the utmost decorum prevailed. The Japanese appreciate the value of hot baths, and crowd to the spots

where chemical springs offer both health and enjoyment. In some places they stay in the water for weeks together, sitting at night with large stones on the knees to keep them from turning over in their sleep.

At seven next morning, when we left Takaiyu, the roar of the eruption, some four miles off, sounded loud and clear. At eight we were joined by a policeman, who had attempted to reach the crater in order to rescue the man in charge of the bath-house which stood near it. But he had fled. When he heard the preliminary rumbling he thought the devils were after him, and escaped before the deadly shower of mud.

This eruption was not strictly volcanic, like those of Fuji, but resembled that of Mount Tarawera, and also that of Bandai San, not far from the one we were now visiting, which a few years ago destroyed many hundred lives. It was not a gradual eruption of lava or ashes, but a sudden explosion of the surface of the earth. The channel of a hot spring, it is supposed, is closed by the action of an earthquake. The imprisoned water then boils under pressure to an enormous pitch of vehemence, till the sudden generation of irresistible masses of steam throws countless tons of soil and water into the sky.

After a mile of fairly steep ascent we found the vegetation (chiefly dwarf bamboo) thinly coated with blue-grey ashes, and near the crater the shower was still falling in fine dust—enough to make us use the umbrellas that we had luckily brought. The ashes had certainly reached two miles from the point of eruption. Half an hour brought us in sight of a huge column of steam, rushing up with a loud roar from one side of a very large old crater. The flat bottom of the crater was a sea of mud, across which we waded, past a pool in the centre. A geological professor from Tokio University was already on the scene, and informed us that this pool, which had been boiling before the eruption, was now cool.

The mud became ankle-deep, and then knee-deep, till at last we could wade no farther. Rushing sounds of steam or water just beneath our feet warned us to be cautious. We were, in fact, fortunate, for a few days later the mountain burst again, and some lives were lost. We, however, stood with impunity 50 yards or so from the edge of this gigantic earth explosion. The rift ran up the hill for about 300 yards with a long line of steam-jets in front of it.

The great column of steam rushed up to perhaps 200 feet, hiding the hill beyond. Had the wind veered round, nothing could have saved us. Now and then rocks fell in from the sides of the rift, and were shot upwards, falling again with loud reports. The mass of driven steam, shining white against the hill, the expanse of desolating mud, and the terrifying noise, were impressive indeed. The precariousness of human life on this cooling fire-ball was brought home to one with intense reality.

I took some photographs, and with difficulty we plunged and dragged ourselves to a snowfield. There the mud lay only a few inches deep, with large stones upon it, clearly placed on the snow by no hand but that of the eruption.

Sitting on the mud was not attractive, but it was long since breakfast, and we had also come upon three Japanese students, distressed by fatigue and hunger. They had started for the day without taking any food, and soon helped us to demolish our lunch. Leaving them much revived, we pressed on up the hill, walking over pine-trees swept down by the mud, but which the wind had blown towards the crater. At last the mud ceased, and our way over the mountain-top was easy. We then

descended past a frozen crater-lake—shining brilliant blue amid the snow—through snowy pine woods, to Takaiyu, from which we hastened south, glad to exchange the desolating eruption for the cherry-blossom of the capital.

BALKAN HILLS

CHAPTER IV

BALKAN HILLS

THE BALKAN PENINSULA is the most irregular of the three prongs which Europe throws out into the southern sea. Above all other qualities it is mountainous, but in particular it is a mountain chaos. It wholly lacks the graceful simplicity of Italy, with her backbone of Apennines. It is a confused extension of both the Alps and the Carpathians. Its ranges run both north to south and west to east. While the Alps become the Pindus, and run a more or less normal course southward into Greece, the Carpathians, apparently unaffected by the geological movements which created their neighbours, turn southwards, when they have dipped underneath the Danube, and then, like a snake, wind eastwards again to the Black Sea. The two ranges form a ganglion before they part, and there, from the angle between them, the most beautiful range of the peninsula, including the Rilo and the Rhodope, runs towards the south-east.

Limestone is everywhere, except at the great heights where granite appears. In these few

instances, summits such as Rilo, the peerless Olympus, Musala in the Rhodope, Lubotin, or "the Lovely Thorn", in the Shar, attain to 9,000 feet.

The rivers are even more capricious. Though the neck of the peninsula is so wide, yet the rain which falls on the Dinaric Alps within a few miles of the Adriatic is shouldered away by the narrow neck of mountains and directed right across the peninsula to the Black Sea, so that though its base is by far wider than that of either Italy or Spain, the Balkan is almost wholly severed from Europe by a line of water. Not content with this irregularity of formation, other rivers make confusion worse confounded by cutting through the ranges which might have been expected to turn the flow of water in an opposite direction. Thus the Isker, which at Sofia appears to be debarred from the Danube by the most definite wall of mountains imaginable, pierces straight through the Old Balkan, as it is called, and flows to the north instead of the east. Quite close by, the Struma, which would appear destined for the Black Sea, bores through the Rilo range and makes a most unexpectedly economic route to the Aegean. The Drin accomplishes an even more remarkable

feat in severing the whole enormous rampart of the Pindus, and connects, against all possible expectations, the centre of the peninsula with the Adriatic. The great Maritsa, which drains Eastern Rumelia, makes another unlikely turn, and, again to the advantage of future commerce, chooses the open Aegean in preference to the closed waters of the Black Sea. Strangest of all, the Danube, which is on one side a Balkan stream, penetrates the otherwise unconquered mass of the Carpathians at the famous Iron Gates. This habit of cutting through ranges accounts for the prevalence of the Turkish name *Demirkapu* (gate of iron). A fair sample of the formation, on a small scale, may be seen between Belgrade and Nish from the luxurious carriages of the Orient Express.

It is natural in such a geological confusion that the land should not be without lakes. Of all the scenic attractions which, in no distant future, will make the Balkans a new and fashionable Switzerland, its lakes will probably be the most popular. Certainly, to-day there does not exist in Europe anything more picturesque than the lake of Ochrida, where all that is attractive in the old towns of Italy is combined with the contrast of the isolated

peak above the lake, crowned with medieval fortresses, and the plain in which it stands, the wooded hills beyond the plain, and the interminable ranges of the Albanian mountains showing purple behind the lake.

It is not surprising, in view of this confusion of features, that the climate also is distinguished for variety. Included in the peninsula we have the balmy Riviera of the north-west, and a winter of Russian rigour in the east, while tropical violence of heat is met with in the south.

There is something entirely its own, also, in the astonishing contrasts of Balkan scenery. At times it is perfectly European. In Bosnia, Morihovo, or Rhodope, it is Alpine, with pines and meadows, where the mountains above them are of sufficient height. In other districts of Bosnia, and again in parts of the Rhodope, it is absolutely English, and you might imagine yourself in some magnified Haslemere district of Surrey, with a great profusion of fir and bracken. But the typical impression of the commonest form of Balkan country is one of rather arid hills, often of a nakedness like those of Greece, with few trees, but a great prevalence of low scrub, usually oak or beech. Next

below these you have the prevailing cultivated land, whose distinctive features are the apparent coarseness of the soil and the absence of hedges or trees except where the land is dotted with oaks. These are usually lopped close to the trunk to their full height, so as to look like an inferior Lombardy poplar, or else pollarded at ten or twelve feet and employed for stacking hay. It is markedly a brown country, and appears more arid than it really is, for it undulates in such a way that even large villages are frequently concealed until you come close upon them. The contrast is then very striking between the bare country with little green in view, except the willows along the river, and the extreme luxuriance of the fruit trees round the village; walnuts also grow to an immense size wherever the hand of man chooses to encourage them.

Finally, we have great alluvial plains, some of them extremely rich, but in general giving the impression of wasted aridity, such as we associate rather with Asia. Here we touch the second of the two most notable geographical features in the Balkans—the fact that it is the frontier-land of Europe. Here Europe shades into Asia. The shores of the Bosphorus are

both alike, yet on the northern side you cannot say that the scenery is anything but European; on the other you may equally protest that your surroundings are Asiatic. Thus the two great qualities of the Balkans are these: (1) their form is that of a broad chaos of mountains, an Italy of a vaster and ruder kind; (2) their position is that of a frontier on the borderland of Asia.

Resulting from geological chaos, the student of the picturesque might claim that the Balkan is a land above all others of striking scenery. He might dwell on the fact that it includes some of the most famous features of the world, particularly in respect of lakes, of harbours, and of hills. Certainly, among the sights of the world should be included the Gulf of Cattaro, where the steamer threads her way, under black walls of rock 4,000 feet high, into the very heart of the Balkan range. Those who have seen Ochrida are bound to claim it as a thing unique; and the remote valley of Rilo, framed in peaks and forests, and set as with a gem by the gilded roofs of the vast monastery, forms, undoubtedly, one of the wonders of the earth. Or, again, we might select as the distinguishing note of the Balkans the quality

of variety. But I think that which is most typical is a certain habit of contrast, amounting almost to paradox.

Whereas in Italy the great plains assume their natural position at the foot of the mountains, in the Balkans they often occupy the heights. Thus, also, the rivers rise in plains. Before plunging through deep gorges, they have wound a sluggish course through muddy creeks upon such high plateaux as those of Kossovo. Here, no less than three great rivers rise and flow in different directions—the Drin, the Morava, and the Vardar. On the plain of Sofia, at the very centre of the peninsula, although at the foot of towering mountains, you are yet at such an altitude that the climate is bracing, like the Riffel Alp.

A very peculiar form of plain is the absolutely flat deposit of soil in a basin sharply surrounded by steep hills. These are known by the Slav name *polie*, and are most marked in the north-west and in Montenegro, where, on a tiny scale, almost hidden among the interminable rocks, they form the sole means of subsistence of the Montenegrin peasant. They are, in a magnified form, the counterpart of the pot-holes of Yorkshire.

Similarly, the enormous limestone rivers which spring suddenly to birth are exaggerations of our own chalk streams; and, indeed, it is difficult to distinguish the delightful gradations of English chalk-country till one has seen the same features in their exaggerated form in the Balkans.

Sometimes these streams are not exaggerated, but exact, reproductions of Hampshire trout-streams. The most astonishing combination of contrasts of this kind is to be found at Philippi. Driving from Drama, you come across the plain to an inn, which was lately Turkish. A few yards away are the remains of the Roman town, and vast Corinthian columns stand up among the bare fields without any indication that there had ever been reason for men to collect and live upon the spot. A little below, on the very edge of the plain, there are willows, and what looks from a distance like an oasis in a desert; but strolling down to the water, you find, without exception, all the notable features of a Hampshire trout-stream. Rising suddenly in a reedy marsh, it glides away with even course and regular depth through meadows with fine grass and absolutely crystalline water. You see something rise in

the water as you walk along the bank, exactly like a trout. And here alone does the slightest difference appear between the Macedonian and the English stream, for the trout proves to be a water-tortoise.

On the northern slope of the Rhodope I came suddenly on a grassy hill-side with straggling woods of Scotch fir, where I could hardly believe myself to be elsewhere than in Forfarshire, till, riding down towards the vineyards of the lower country, I heard a shout in front of the cavalcade, and saw a couple of bears galloping off into the wood.

On the southern side of the ranges the pines seem to find insufficient moisture. But to the north you get the autumn colours of Northern Europe in their most gorgeous quality. Pear-trees, which stud the slopes of the Rhodope, turn in September to a scarlet which is certainly not rivalled elsewhere, and I have never seen a more astonishing effect than a pear-tree half covered with wild vine, adding a different hue of scarlet as well as of gold. Occasionally the contrast is thrown into more striking proximity, where on the southern side of a range the shoulders run to a sharp edge, and you may notice a series

of such shoulders, in every case growing pine-trees on the west side, exactly to the sharp edge of the ridge; while on the east, where the soil is dried by the early sun for the whole day, no tree contrives to exist.

Within a few miles of the splendid forests of *Pinus Macedonica* you find yourself on the plains among tropical palms. Whereas the British Empire must stretch from Canada to India in order to exert "dominion over palm and pine", both are included in Macedonia. From the palms, again, a few hours' ride takes you to fields of mountain colchicum—the autumn crocus. Starting in the early morning, before sunrise, I have seen acres of these flowers lying in the frost as if dead upon the grass. An hour later, when the sun has climbed over the hill, they start up and open to such width that the whole hill-side will be violet-coloured in a few minutes. Higher up, again, in springtime, you see grape-hyacinths and chionodoxa, contrasting its azure blue, as the name suggests, with the snow. But in the same day you may find yourself down in the valley pursuing an English lane, with black-berries and sloes and traveller's-joy.

BULGARIAN PEASANT TYPES

The quality of contrast is not confined to inanimate things. You may see the gorgeous roller, brilliant as the jays of India, and, close by, the homely water-ouzel. By the side of oaks and walnuts you find great tortoises and snakes eight feet long; while bears and wolves abound. They are a serious drag upon industry, and even in civilized Bulgaria it has lately been found necessary to increase the Government rewards for killing them. Some thirty years ago a party of peasants, with horses, was wholly destroyed by wolves in the Morihovo mountains, nothing but the bits and stirrup-irons being found to record them. As late as 1929, on account of the exceptional arctic conditions which froze the Continent from the Baltic to the Aegean Sea in the early spring months, famished wolves have ventured forth and devoured human beings in the remoter parts of Greece, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. In the Morihovo, the peasants migrate for the summer to lofty shoulders, where the land is flat enough to grow little patches of maize, and here, night after night, they will sit up with a fire to drive off bears; there are thrilling stories of women carrying a baby in one arm and with the other brandishing a torch to

beat off a bear. The prevalence of eagles is a delightful feature for the traveller, and on the cliffs of Montenegro I once counted, at the same moment, thirty-nine ravens.

The paradox observable in Nature extends to Man, and here is a case of extraordinary interest, showing the influence of geographical conditions upon humanity.

The Balkans is a country of mixed racial types. You have the Albanian, universally famed for his loyalty, his love of country, his preference for living on the fruits of other men's labour, with his interesting language and character. In the old days of Turkey in Europe, the Mahomedan convert amongst Greeks and Slavs became a Turk, but an Albanian Moslem remained true to his nation's hopes, though he was often found among the ablest of Turkish governors. You have the Greek, clever and active, and conspicuous as a trader and a politician. You have the Serb, full of poetry and romance; inspired by nationalism drawn from memories of ancient empire. You have the Bulgar, noted for industry on the land and for a curious stubborn optimism. In 1906, when the International

Gendarmerie was quartered in Macedonia, an Italian officer received an answer from a Macedonian Bulgar that illustrates it well. The men of a certain village were accustomed to cut wood on the mountain, but so many of them had been killed when at work that the officer asked them why they continued to run the risk. The peasant replied: "Why should we not continue to cut wood? If we are not killed we shall bring back the wood." You have Vlachs (Rumanian by descent), Jews, and Mahomedan Bulgars, Mahomedan Greeks, and, in Bosnia, Mahomedan Serbs.

The peace settlement of 1919 has added another variety to this strangely assorted population—the Westernized Slavs, the Croat and the Slovene, whose countries have been added to Serbia to form Yugoslavia. Identical in race and language with the Serbs, these two groups are a people apart in training, religion, environment, and culture.

While the Serbs remained in the medieval backwash of Turkish rule, the Croats and Slovenes were brought up under the civilized conditions afforded by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and regarded themselves as Europeans with a Western outlook and habits of mind:

the urban Croats and Slovenes are very largely bilingual, German being a lingua franca with the outside world; in religion they are Roman Catholic, while the Serbs, of course, are Greek Orthodox. The grave difficulties in which Yugoslavia finds herself to-day show how superficial the common racial factor can be in face of widely differing cultures and other factors of environment.

What is the cause of this confusion of types? It is the second characteristic of the Balkans which we noticed—their situation as the frontier-land between Europe and Asia.

Many paradoxical contrasts are produced by this confusion of races and religions. It must strike you as a very remarkable thing when you first go among the Pomaks, as the Moslem Bulgars are called, to see the peculiarly aggressive expression that characterizes Mahomedans, combined with the blue eyes that suggest Europe; the colour is inappropriate, as you judge from experience of Turkish faces. Incidentally, it is a curious phenomenon that these blue eyes are not common among the Bulgarians proper, which appears to indicate some difference in blood, contrary to the theory that the Pomaks are of the same race.

The combination of European blood with Asiatic religion produces a pleasant contrast in Bosnia. The Moslem fatalism which in a Turkish country produces a general air of decay, and much indifference to economic progress, is powerless among the Bosnian Slavs to remove their natural industry and optimism; and Mahomedanism takes on quite a different colour when you see a number of clean and well-dressed men of business attending spotless and up-to-date mosques with an air of progressive activity.

Twenty years ago, travelling where Turkish rule remained, one could hardly believe that this country was once the granary of Rome, so little did it produce. The man who imported machinery or attempted to better himself by working a factory or mill was lucky if the Governor did not trump up against him a charge of murder and throw him into prison until he had disgorged his fortune. Thus, in literal fact, the most attractive industry for a man of energy and efficiency was that of brigandage. Of intellectual professions there was absolutely none to satisfy an active mind. The literature of the country consisted of the

records of murder kept by the European Consuls, and the lists drafted by murder committees of those destined to be punished with death.

It would appear from the markets of the large towns that the most profitable field of business was in fire-arms and large knives. But these did not adequately indicate the extent of the trade, for beneath the surface a large importation of modern rifles was carried on from the neighbouring countries into what was left of European Turkey. The rifle trade was mysterious. I saw in the mountains the villagers collected for hunting bears with ancient flint-lock rifles, and the Turkish gendarme carrying a Martini; but this again was vastly inferior to the Mausers or Manlichers which accompanied a rebel band. The best of the thought and effort and wealth of the people was thus turned away from real to false industry.

Disorder was even causing a progressive diminution of production. Many a mountain farm became unsafe to visit, and a European resident, who had done much big-game shooting, told me that recent troubles had in this way greatly increased the stock of red deer. Meanwhile, valuable forests were being rapidly cut

down, and afforestation was totally neglected, being often prevented by the unregulated grazing of goats.

It may be that the bare and coarse-looking surface of the lands of the Balkans is partly due to the absence of that continual human care which in Europe has done so much to produce the firm texture of the meadows. In this way the habits of man have affected the landscape; but there is a weird story in Bosnia which puts cause and effect the other way. It is said that a Turkish farmer used every week to miss one of his sheep. At last he discovered that his shepherd, having killed the sheep by the river, threw it into the stream where, in Bosnian fashion, it plunged under the hill. The man's brother waited at the appointed time to meet the carcase where it emerged from the ground on the other side of the hill. The Turk said nothing about his suspicions, but one day cut the throat of the shepherd, threw him into the river, and enjoyed the thought of the brother's discomfiture when, instead of the sheep, there appeared the shepherd's body.

IN BUCAREST

CHAPTER V

IN BUCAREST

I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT that assassins must be remarkable men. To go into danger in cold blood, and without a single companion; to go to almost certain punishment and probable death—this must surely require a clearness of head and a strength of nerve of a high order.

It falls to few to be approached by a personality of this kind, and still fewer have the opportunity of studying such a man in conversation. Having myself met with this unusual experience, I jot down my impressions.

A Turk was sent from Constantinople to assassinate me when on a mission in the Balkans in the early days of the War. For some time he waited his opportunity at Sofia, occupying a room next to mine in the hotel at the Bulgarian capital: but hearing that my brother and I were going on to Rumania, where the death penalty was not in force, he preferred to operate at Bucarest.

Taking advantage of the dense crowd which gathered at the funeral obsequies of King

Carol, he approached unawares and fired point-blank as we seated ourselves in an open car. We were both wounded, but being close to our hotel, were able to reach our bedroom unaided. Then a strange scene followed.

In a few minutes the bedroom became filled with a stream of inquirers, who kept coming and going, many in Court dress, from the royal funeral. I sat helpless on the bed, gagged with a bandage, and my brother lay motionless on the next bed, apparently dying. The news had spread in the crowded streets, and soon arrived *The Times* correspondent—our old friend J. D. Bourchier; the British Minister, Sir George Barclay, in gold lace; and a jostling company of journalists, prefects, and waiters. Then doctor after doctor pushed his way to my bedside to help or to get the job. In succession they whispered in my ear to say that the others were fools. To crown the confusion, the gendarmes thought the place and moment appropriate for bringing in the assailant, heavily handcuffed and guarded by two soldiers with fixed bayonets. They insisted that I must identify and interrogate. I indicated that I wanted to know why he wished to kill me.

The man replied, "Because you have caused Turkish blood to be shed."

This formality over, the Turk was hurried away, no further question being put and several people telling him he had contradicted what he said before.

Meanwhile, in deadly fear for my brother's life, I vainly tried to get the room airy and quiet. My own wound was a broken jaw, so that I could not speak, and my only interpreter, J. D. Bourchier, was almost stone-deaf. I pointed to paper, and then handed him a note: "Clear the room." The British Minister had chosen a doctor from among the disputing consultants. But Take Jonescu, the well-known statesman, had sent for his brother, Thoma Jonescu, the most celebrated surgeon in Rumania, who presently swept in, sparkling with orders, put everyone in his place, and insisted on our being taken to hospital. My brother had been shot through the lung, but his healthy constitution, or else a miracle, saved his life.

When we had recovered, I took the first opportunity of applying for facilities to visit the assassin, a Turk from Constantinople. The authorities arranged a meeting in the room

of the *Juge d'Instruction*, at the Palais de Justice. The prisoner, Hassan Taxim—for such was his name—entered the room followed by an armed soldier. We desired to be left alone with him, and everyone left the room except the judge. We sat down like friends, lolling in our chairs as if we had just been dining together.

Hassan proved to be a rather nice-looking young man. His account of himself was that he had been a student at Paris, had read philosophy at the Sorbonne, studied at the École des Sciences politiques, and become an earnest patriot. We discussed the ethics of assassination and politics in Turkey. He spoke very fast, gasping nervously when taking breath. He was obviously an *exalté*.

We continued as follows, in French:

N.B.: Why did you try to kill us?

Hassan: My aim was to punish; to show that Turks are not sheep; to teach a lesson; to show that Turks do not pardon their enemies.

N.B.: What advantage would it be to your country?

Hassan: It would encourage Turkey and would be remembered by her young men.

N.B.: Do you hate people because they are not Mahomedans?

Hassan: No, I only hate the Greeks.

N.B.: The Christian religion enjoins pardon.

Hassan: I know the Gospels. The Bible is the *chef-d'œuvre* of English literature.

N.B.: Your act may help us in Bulgaria.

Hassan (playfully): Alors je serai décoré par le comité balkanique.

At this point a friend joined us and said to Hassan, "When you failed to kill Mr. Buxton, did you think he was protected by God?" He replied: "No; I thought the cartridges must be bad."

In point of fact, what foiled him was the extremely tough leather of my pocket-book. Striking its edge the bullet spent itself against an elastic resistance and dropped in the breast-pocket of my jacket.

He had read Spencer, whose individualism attracted him, and liked the poet Blake, who spoke of "soaring like an eagle"—such writers gave him strength to attempt to execute alone the deed, which he owed to no one else's inspiration.

A few days later we saw him again, on this occasion in prison in a gloomy, dark cell, with two blankets and a small pillow on the bare boards.

We obtained permission to talk to Hassan in a decent room, and we were alone with him for an hour. After a genial talk I drew my revolver (carefully unloaded) and offered it to Hassan, saying, "Shoot me now if you wish."

Hassan recoiled with a gesture of repugnance. Human contact brings natural instincts into play. Our sense of one another had become too vivid; we were no longer abstractions to each other—the assassin on one side, the anti-Turk on the other. If every man's imagination penetrated the murky barriers of emotion, killing in war or in crime would become impossible.

Hassan expressed a special interest in literature, so we searched the shops next day and sent him the best we could find—Edmund Gosse's *English Literature*, the Koran, and the New Testament—all in French. We also sent him a rug, and the warder must have told the Rumanian press, for next day the papers said we "admired his patriotism" and sent a rug "because he was too thin".

Hassan was ably defended at his trial, but was sentenced to five years' labour in the salt-mines —which was regarded as fairly certain death.

A year later the Germans took Bucarest. I thought of Hassan's stroke of luck. He would surely get released and would be fêted on reaching home. But it seemed unlikely that I should ever learn the facts. Strangely enough, news of his end reached me years afterwards through a British naval officer who was present when the Greeks took Smyrna. This officer inquired the reason why particular Turks were selected for slaughter and their bodies laid out on the quay. One of them, he learnt, had been a hero in the Turkish quarter, through his exploit in attempting to assassinate the Englishman at Bucarest in 1914, and had been noted as a persecutor of the Greeks.

The officer took photos of the row of corpses and sent me a copy, and there, sure enough, only looking a trifle older, lay Hassan Taxim.

ROUND ABOUT ARARAT

CHAPTER VI

ROUND ABOUT ARARAT

ONE FINE EVENING, in the autumn of 1913, I drove out from Erivan to see how the Armenian villagers fared under Russian rule. The plain, that would be arid waste without irrigation, has here come to look like the rich land one sees in Belgium to the west of Brussels—small farms intersected with lines of cypress shaped like Lombardy poplars; but here, in place of wheat and cabbages, they are growing vines, rice, and cotton. The presence of orchards—mulberry or peach—is denoted by high mud-walls along the road. As we moved farther, the walls became continuous, and ripe apricots and quinces hung over them. Water-courses lined our route on each side, feeding the roots of a double row of poplars. At intervals the wall was pierced by the windows of the farmer's house, flat-roofed, and at this season quaintly surmounted by stacks of corn. Old-fashioned mud dwellings were yielding here and there to new fronts of stone, finely dressed. Big doorways at the side gave a glimpse of yards and verandahs; well-heads; great earthen

jars; and farther on the orchard, with raised wooden sleeping-platforms used in the hot Araxes Valley. In time, the holdings became so thick as to give the effect of a prolonged village, an unending community of picturesque market-gardeners—every man happy under his vine and his fig-tree.

As we travelled southward and the sun sank westward, Ararat, flanked with sunset colour, dominated the world below. Ararat is higher than Mont Blanc, and standing alone, it towers uniquely. Yet there is something specially restful about its broad shoulders of perpetual snow. With the soaring quality of Fuji it combines a sense of holding, up there, a place of repose:

> The high still dell
> Where the Muses dwell,
> Fairest of all things fair.

Winnowers were using the last daylight on the green; a man was washing a horse after the burning day, standing shoulder-deep in the stream; buffaloes, shining like black velvet, walked sedately home from their bath. The day's work was ending, and we now kept passing family groups sitting at the doorway. Here a boy was playing with a tame hawk; there

a father, in most un-English fashion, held in his arms the baby.

The houses now became continuous, and shops appeared; wine-presses; forges; agricultural machines; Russian gendarmes gossiping outside the inn; wagon-builders and copper-pot makers. The slanting sun displayed a kaleidoscope of industry neither primitive nor capitalist—human economy at its most picturesque stage of development.

We halted to see the village priest, whose son was a student at St. Petersburg University. As we sat in his balcony, the hum of village voices and movements arose above the gathering stillness of nature.

To the right of Ararat stretched the line of hills which forms the present Russo-Turkish frontier. Upon this horizon the sun set. It was a memorable combination—the eternal snow one associates with the North framed with the glowing brilliance of the southern sun. Byron was within the mark when he wrote of that sun:

> Not as in Northern climes obscurely bright,
> But one unclouded blaze of living light.

There is something more than that. Those who have watched the white flames of a smelting

furnace, and still more those who have climbed near its rim on a dark night, can picture something of the effulgence that streamed up from behind that blackening line of mountains—an effulgence quite correctly described as "molten".

The traveller who goes East will experience other pleasures besides the viewing of magnificent scenery; he will find the charm and colour of a primitive social order. Go and watch, for instance, an Oriental bazaar. The soul must be dead which does not wish to preserve such things; but you must be an artist to picture them. I will venture only to name what lives in the memory.

The winding narrow road, lined with shops, is roofed over with brick domes built in close succession. Between them are arches to support the weight, built with an exquisite curve, like the Tudor arch, but less flattened. As you near the end of this tunnelled thoroughfare, the arches, catching the increasing rays, stand out with extraordinary effectiveness from the intervening shadows.

The Turkish builders, and still more the Persian, delight in brick vaulting, and each dome between the arches is a masterpiece.

MOUNT ARARAT

It is pierced with a hole for air and light, through which a shaft of sunlight strikes down. These shafts, turning the dusty air to gold, give an effect which quite deludes the newcomer. Against the deep shade, in which the dust is not visible, they appear to be solid yellow columns supporting the roof. They recall Meredith's simile, "Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine."

The world of men below is worthy of the setting. The crowd, dressed with an infinity of tints, streams along. The shops, fully open to the street, are unobscured by glass. A whole shop-front, solid with fruit, provides a splash of colour even more brilliant than the dresses of men. No wheeled traffic subdues the sound of voices. One hears the footsteps of men, horses, donkeys—even the soft thud of the camel. A whole quarter is devoted to handicrafts. On the same spot the article is made and sold. Nail-makers ply their tiny forge, two of them hammering deftly in turn at the same glowing metal. Weavers are weaving carpets and selling them then and there. It is an exhibition which the Home Arts Society might envy; a vision of applied arts as they ought to be; its aesthetic simplicity outclasses our

efforts, but already its existence is threatened by the competition of the factory.

Look back under the vaulted brickwork, lit from the open end of the bazaar with hollow sunlight, and ask yourself, "Must it all go? Must this road be fifty feet wide, with tramlines and taxis?"

Its charm throws your sympathy dead against reform. But think the matter out further. Must civilization be without what is good in this bazaar? Not wholly. The West is recovering its senses. Mechanicalism will be driven from our art, both fine and applied. The ugliness of the factory itself is yielding already to smoke-consumers, electric power, and garden cities. Lovely old streets and buildings will be treasured when town-planning becomes efficient. Moreover, unreformed government is no security for their preservation. In Oriental towns they are already scarce. In the villages, picturesque features indeed remain, but so they do under Western methods of government.

And socially (which matters more, for it affects more people) what does this medieval bazaar imply? A state of poverty and insanitation that will very soon obtrude on you; dirt, smells, starved horses, savage villages, diseases

unknown in the West, beggar children—whose half-blinded eyes haunt the memory. It means rags, hovels, women veiled. The beauty of this bazaar is the rarefied product of a world of tears. Orderly rule would banish many miseries and yet preserve what is really beautiful.

Reflections such as these rose often in the mind as I rode through Turkish Armenia. I had not lingered in Turkish country districts since 1907 (a year before the Young Turk regime), and the contrast was surprising. Men whom it would then have been impossible to see, because it would get them into trouble, now readily associated with foreigners and talked even in open places without fear. Schools and clubs were being rapidly built, even clubs of the Armenian nationalists. Taxes were not collected with the old brutality—formerly, the last fuel and the bedding of the sick were taken. Armenian village police guards had been appointed. On many roads you might drive without an escort. Letters were delivered, even to agitators. Great progress in education had been made possible. Many regiments were largely Christian, the artillery mainly Armenian. Newspapers attacked the Government. Above all, travel was allowed without passports.

An Armenian school inspector visiting his schools obtained a gendarme escort; and Armenians from Russia might be found travelling for pleasure, taking photographs and writing up local archaeology.

What was to be said on the other side? It was urged by most Christians that not only were these cheering signs negative and trifling, but that the situation was positively worse than of old. It was worse in this way—that liberty had been tasted (after the revolution the Kurds feared possible punishment and desisted from crime) and was now lost. It was worse because Young Turks were more intelligent than old ones, and the danger of permanent subjection was therefore greater. Again, the Kurds, dreading the approach of reform, were more alert and active. Armenian emigration was thereby increased, and the national cause was jeopardized.

The onlooker who sought an answer to the question, "Ought Europe to intervene?" might well arrive at one answer or the other. Both views of such a problem were justified, more especially to the traveller in Turkey, where one of the strangest features was the juxta-

position of good and bad. Scenes of peace, which would elsewhere indicate order, were immediately succeeded by evidence of chaotic insecurity. Peasants who complained to your gendarme that your driver had taken their corn and refused to pay, as if all the machinery of justice were at their disposal, were the next moment ridden down and flogged as if flogging were the gendarme's habitual amusement. There was no system; there was only a capricious freedom for privileged classes. Thus, unless he inquired closely and had means of knowing the people, an observer might, according to the hazard of his experience, with equal honesty defend the Turkish regime or condemn it.

Certain facts, however, forbade the rational critic to "sit on the fence".

The Armenians, whose favourable opinion of the Young Turks at the time of their brilliant *coup d'état* justified the support given to the movement in England and France, saw now that the possession of power had destroyed progressive ideals and revived Turkish chauvinism. The best hope for Young Turkey lay in the offers of full support from the most active race in Asiatic Turkey. If the Turkish reformers could, and would, defy the Moslem fanatics

who resent the punishment of a Moslem for a crime against a Christian—would waive their claim to racial ascendancy over the Armenians and make an alliance with them—they could maintain domination, perhaps, over all the other races, including the Kurds, and avoid European intervention. There was still a powerful section of Armenians who hoped and worked for this solution. But difference of temperament—democratic versus feudal; intellectual versus fanatical—provided no prospect of successful co-operation. The Turks, having rejected Armenian help, had elected to be judged by their own policy.

They were faced with a problem which would tax the skill of the most enlightened ruler. When Abdul Hamid—least enlightened of all—heard of Lord (then Mr.) Bryce's appointment as Chief Secretary for Ireland, he remarked, "He has got his own Macedonia now." But the solution of autonomy which Lord Bryce favoured could never appeal to the Turks. They were the least adaptable of all empires.

Accordingly, a pro-Kurdish policy was adopted. Kurds who had taken service with the Government themselves protested against the licence accorded to their countrymen. A gendarme

riding along with us as escort illustrated the situation thus: "Look at that village. I could go there and kill half a dozen people. Who would punish me? I am a Kurd."

A certain post-carriage was escorted by four gendarmes. Passing through Kurd country they arrived at night deprived of their rifles. They returned home, were again armed, and again were robbed. They met with the same fate a third time. Humorous residents said it became normal. The Governor's solution of the problem was to continue sending an escort but to send it without arms.

These things were comparative trifles. The question of the lands seized by Kurds in the days of massacre was more important. This vast robbery was unremedied even after five years of "constitutional" rule. One rash Armenian, applying to the Court, was granted an injunction and presented it to the Kurd who occupied the ancestral farm. The latter lost no time in killing the Armenian. Doubtless the Turkish judge enjoyed his joke.

Early every morning you might see the door of the Russian Consulate at Van besieged by applicants for passports. Life among Kurds, they said, was a living death, and the villagers

were leaving for Russia or America. At Igdir, just out of Turkey, we saw many refugees. A woman, whose children ranged from five upwards, had lost her husband in the massacre of March 1908; lately, a Kurd had burnt the house of her neighbour; so she and her brother decided to leave. We asked how long it took them to walk (with four children) from their village, from which we had driven in four days. They replied that they had taken fifteen days.

The Turks, hampered as they were by the fanaticism of their uneducated masses, and wanting in energy, failed entirely to suppress crime. Their defect was thus partly negative; some functions of government they could not, and some they would not, perform. But they also positively stimulated crime, for they actually armed the Kurds with modern rifles. The Armenians did not ask to be protected, they only complained that they were not allowed to protect themselves. Wolves and bears can live in the same hills, even in the same cage, without harming each other. But in this case the bear had his claws drawn. While the bear might not use his claws, the wolf was given better teeth. How the subject population survived it was hard for the stranger to imagine.

IN THE ARMENIAN HIGHLANDS

There comes a moment in pack-horse travelling which brings a peacefulness of unusual character. It is when you have packed your baggage in the early dawn and the men are, with infinite dawdling, putting it on the saddles. You may complain that they are late, foreseeing the misery of arriving at some dirty hovel in the evening—after dark—but no activity on your part will move them faster; and if you are wise you will sit down again and smoke. The moment affords, in some strange way, a pipe of superfine tranquillity. Such a moment came to me in an Armenian village in 1913. A priest, a learned man, sat with me in the little room. Conversation ceased, and I smoked in silence while he leant on the table, sitting on the bed which served for chairs, his chin on his hands. I looked hard at the black figure in profile, thrown into artistic relief by the extreme simplicity of the setting. In the perceptive quietness of the moment the scene recalled Whistler's picture of his mother. The bare mud-wall was like the brown-paper walls affected by the aesthetic in England. The priest faced the window, which was on my right, and in the strong light I saw that this man, with short moustache and beard, resembled some of

the portraits of Christ. Forgetting himself as we sat silent, the priest sighed deeply. Then for a time I saw and felt the outlook of the Armenian, and the world in which he would be remaining when we had passed on, with our equipment for pleasure, our perfect security, our prospect of early return to civilization. Only four years ago the very monastery in this village was occupied by Turkish troops. The priest had been sent to revive a scattered flock and succour a group of Armenian villages in the hills around. Yesterday he had buried a peasant—killed by Kurds, left mutilated for many days till he was found by chance. His villagers' houses were daily seized by Kurds favoured by the Government. Could we not stay to see them? I feared this would only bring further trouble on himself and the village clergy who would show us the houses. "What do we care?" he said. "They can do nothing worse to us than they do already."

Another side of the Turkish evil was conspicuous in the policy of Moslem settlement—the placing of *mohajir* (military settlers) among Christians to keep them in order. Its wisdom had been much debated in Turkish circles.

Its great advocate was the brilliant doctor, Nazim Bey, of Salonica, who successfully urged the importation of Bosnian Moslems in 1910 and 1911. Two generations ago the Circassians, removed from Russian rule in the Caucasus, were planted as *mohajir* both in Europe and Asia. Neither of these precedents was a happy one. The Circassians perpetrated the Batak massacre of 1876, which cost Turkey four provinces. The poor Bosnians had a short stay in their new homes—sometimes newly built for them on waste land. I saw those villages standing empty in 1912, when the Bosnians, at the approach of the Bulgarian army, had moved in haste still farther from Bosnia. The latest form of the *mohajir* method we came on by chance in Armenia. A large number of Kurds, objecting to the order established by the Russians in Persia, west of Lake Urmia, had crossed to the Turkish side of the frontier, which had just been fixed so as to correct the recent encroachment of Turkish troops near Salmas. We found many Kurd families installed in an Armenian village, the ejected population being crowded into the remaining houses. Other peasants had been notified to give up their houses, by a fixed date, to Kurds still occupying

their summer tents. This was not the usual phenomenon of robbery. Dispossession was systematically ordered and carried out by authority—Vali, Kaimakam, Mudir, and Zaptieh —a far more scandalous matter. The practice proved to be in force in numbers of other villages. In the capital of the *vilayet*, the Consuls had actually not heard of the evictions three weeks later, so little were they regarded as abnormal. The Vali did not deny, but frankly discussed, the system. He quaintly urged the difficulty of finding houses for Kurds in any other way. The consular machinery of information through native dragomans, often thought to produce exaggeration, had in this case missed an event which was of more real political significance than violent outrage. Yet this *vilayet* was considered the most orderly of all the provinces.

The Armenians could lay to the charge of the Turks far graver misdeeds than the dispossession of their homes. Their minds were filled with the memory of massacres, the practice of which the Young Turk Constitution of 1908 had not brought to an end.

Without an interpreter who inspired Armenian confidence, one would have been told nothing.

We were making friends with an attractive child about four years old when his father murmured something to our interpreter. I asked what he was saying. There had been no mention of Turks or troubles, and I was surprised when I learnt the thought which had occurred to him. It was expressed thus: "They killed thousands of boys like that one, in the massacres."

On arriving at an Armenian house in Van, the old housewife struck us at once as possessing charm and promise, and we were distinctly disappointed to find her cold, sad, and unresponsive. Not a smile could we bring to her face. Our cheerless quarters, after supper, demanded the solace of cocoa, and the old woman accepted a cup. She had done her best to wait on us, providing hot water (she had little else), and it pleased her now to have us wait upon her in our turn by serving her from our own tea-basket. Our polyglot companion drew her into general talk. It turned in time to her children. Why was she alone? Because her daughter had lately married and gone. She was ill at a distant town. She was only about twenty years old. That recalled the dreadful days and, encouraged by another cup of cocoa, she fell to talking about the massacre.

The thing which absorbed her mind, and made her mournfully silent, now made her eloquent.

The scene became arresting—the old woman, the thrilling voice, the handsome features, framed in a black scarf and set off by the severely simple room. She would have made a portrait for Rembrandt.

Had she seen people killed? "We heard the shrieks, and smelt the burnt bodies everywhere." Where were she and her children? "I was here; but not in this house—it was burnt down. The English money helped me to rebuild it afterwards. They broke in the door. I got away, just in time, with my children by the back door." Was it by night? "There was no day or night; we never slept for days." Had anyone been left in her house? "A crowd had taken refuge there. They chose out many girls and took them away—and also boys. We never saw them again." It made me think of *Riders to the Sea*, and the mother's voice when she bewailed her son. "We who saw it", she went on, "can't believe in your talk about Turks reforming themselves." Remembering Adana and the melancholy fact that these things occurred again under Young Turkey, we were silent.

IN PERSIA

CHAPTER VII

IN PERSIA

I HAD SELDOM SEEN a more picturesque sight than the escort of Indian Lancers, with their red turbans, as they trotted along the narrow and winding street of Tabriz when the British Consul drove me to pay a call on the Governor—Shujah-ed-Daulah. We were received in a vast room carpeted with exquisite rugs, the west side fully open to the ground and overlooking the spacious garden.

Shujah had taken the house by force from a rich Persian and I admired his aesthetic (if not his moral) taste in doing so, for the garden, with a vast bed of mauve petunias below the terrace by the pool, was something incredible. He was an old man, very handsome with his big white moustache, enriched by a share of what was more legitimately whisker; he might have passed for a French ex-general, tanned by a Moroccan campaign. The interpreter was a suave Persian secretary, sent from Teheran —this being apparently the only recognition by the Shujah of the central government. The Consul considered that he was acting as a spy.

He was a natural son of the ex-Shah, a relationship which often explained the promotion of incompetent men. After the usual compliments, Shujah introduced the subject of politics in Persia, and I inquired, "How is the Constitution succeeding?"

Shujah: The Shah's Government was far better.

N.B.: What is your opinion of the Regent?

Shujah: He is a man of books. Men of books are useless.

N.B.: Did not Abdul Hamid praise the Constitution in Turkey?

Shujah: I do not criticize him, but the Turkish Parliament does no good.

N.B.: Do you approve of Parliament anywhere?

Shujah: Reformers mean well, but they always move too fast.

One might expect the Governor to respect if not to represent the view of his Government, but there lay the peculiarity of Persian governors—they could by violence become semi-independent. He wanted to know what the English people thought of Persia. I remembered one of the ugly deeds that attracted British attention to Persia—the hanging of the

chief Mullah in Tabriz; but I refrained—it was Shujah himself who hanged the Mullah.

I afterwards learnt from the French Consul that Shujah reported the conversation, and said: "I told the Englishman the way to govern, but I did not convince even the corner of his eyebrow." He was charmingly polite, true to his national tradition. When a Persian apologizes for turning his back on you, the correct reply is, "You are not turning your back; a rose has no back."

Shujah was cruel, but he punished brigands and provided security on the roads. He had no salary; there are other ways of making an income when you are a despot. He was said to be at his best when out hawking. He gave you the argument for reaction in words; some of his deeds were certainly arguments against it.

The operations of this despot were a symptom of unique political chaos, unthinkable in these post-war times. It arose from Russian imperialism incessantly pushing towards the sea in every available direction, but already thwarted more than once. I am just old enough to remember 1878, and Disraeli's triumph in frustrating the victories of the Russo-Turkish War. In the

nineties, I boarded, at Nagasaki, a Russian cruiser, a sign of the ambition to expand on the Pacific, an ambition doomed to be foiled, this time by the Japanese. After that the most hopeful goal was the Persian Gulf.

Persia looked to England for protection, and in desperation produced the constitutional movement. Swedish officers were engaged to reform the gendarmerie, Belgians the Customs, and Americans the finances.

The parliamentary experiment, working as it did under abnormal difficulties, could by no means be dismissed as futile. The National Assembly was well worth a trial, but a trial it hardly got; the diplomacy of the Great Powers was tied to traditions, which made them hostile. It had relied so long on its partisan friendship for one statesman or another, in weak States like Persia and Turkey, that by nature it hampered a national regime. This undermined the idea of self-respect without which no national government could be vigorous.

What could be said for the "national" movement in Persia? Feeble as its Parliament proved, it produced men whose force both as revolutionists and as deputies was surprising to the most cynical. The Armenian Yeprem and the

Persian Takizade represented elements of strength and public spirit which would not otherwise have seen the light. The deputies themselves compelled attention to moral questions which personal government ignored. The encouragement of the trade in vice by the Teheran police (with a view to levying blackmail) was attacked. A governor who had grown rich by seizing Persian girls and selling them to Tartar chiefs, across the Russian border, was impeached. When all the laughter due to the *Mejliss* was exhausted, it remained a fact that fanatical feeling had been greatly diminished by the Persian parliamentary regime. The very Mullahs who predominated in it had become unpopular, and religious liberty for non-Moslems had vastly increased, so that, as a missionary friend told me, even converts from Islam could preach Christianity without danger.

It was argued, on the other hand, that men who made good agitators had proved to be self-seekers when power was achieved—a feature not unknown in other revolutions. Another charge made among Persians, and explained to me by a leading reactionary—connected with the ex-Shah, was that the national movement and its disorders gave occasion to the Russians

to come in. Many Europeans, again, who supported the Constitution at first, were pessimistic at the time of my visit. In their opinion the autocracy of the Shahs and their corrupt creatures produced still, through sporadic personal energy, the greatest modicum of public order that could be expected. The common people only asked for security from thieves and murderers. The educated classes despaired of getting this without foreign control. Even English traders, if Russian control could be had without Russian import duties, had begun to welcome it. The most hopeful feature lay in the marked success of the Swedish gendarmerie officers, whose work again depended on the Belgian Customs officials; and for maintaining these in due authority a parliament proved to have its use.

But elections and real reforms in the north-west province in contact with the Caucasus (where home rule movements were rigorously suppressed) were too much for Russian nerves, and Persia was induced by threats to withdraw the Swedes from that district. When the siege of Tabriz (in which my friend, Arthur Moore, formerly Secretary to the Balkan Committee and afterwards representative of *The Times*,

inspired the defenders by personal daring) ended in success for the ex-Shah, by the help of Russian troops, Shujah became their protégé, did their dirty work, and became Governor—as a Russian puppet.

When we crossed the Persian frontier, we found ourselves no less under Russian auspices than in the Caucasus. At Julfa, Russian ammunition was being transferred from the railway into wagons. It was cruel work for the small draft bullocks to drag them through the soft sand. I saw a bullock sink down exhausted and lie still till the driver struck a match and held the flame under the poor beast's flank.

A Russian Government motor-bus transported us to Tabriz, and there, when one required facilities for travel, it was to the Russians and not the Persians that one resorted. Russian troops had, indeed, penetrated far into the interior, and we found them establishing their quarters for the winter at Salmas, towards the Turkish frontier.

It was a strange thing to see in an Oriental town like Tabriz large printed notices at frequent intervals. We further observed that without exception these were torn. What was the meaning? They were notices that elections would

be held, and had been put up by order of the central government; but Shujah had sent his police to tear them down. We also found the bazaar was closed—Shujah had closed it and ordered a public demonstration in the square as a protest against elections of any kind. There was a curious sequel when, in response to chaff by the British Consul, Shujah reopened the bazaar and also made a parade of holding elections, admittedly a sham, but designed, he said, to please England. It was, perhaps, a piece of Persian humour to talk of pleasing England, when the ancient citadel with its tower stood battered by Russian guns—a loss to architecture not less melancholy than the ruination of the "Blue Mosque" in a previous invasion of the Turks.

Here was imperialism encroaching on Oriental weakness and producing an anarchy which afforded, as it was said, a refuge for the revolutionaries of three Empires. It was the last effort of the old Czarism before the Great War came, and as such it is noteworthy. But it was also a symptom of high politics in a sphere still more memorable. Why was Russia able to act with this contempt of law and decency? Colleagues of mine in the House of

Commons frequently protested at that time against Sir Edward Grey's apparent indifference to Persia's rights and independence. For myself, I felt such protests vain while the Minister was putting before all other aims the necessity of securing Russian aid in case of war with Germany. Russia took cynical advantage of his desires and Grey was driven to co-operate in the partition of Persia. The exasperation which Russian ambitions and intrigue evoked in England, notably in Conservative circles, is strangely forgotten to-day.

Since the Great War progress moves at a rapid rate, and to-day Persia is a member of the League of Nations. She was recently elected to membership of the Council itself. Not only is her independence thus attested, but she is intimately associated with the Western Powers in the League's executive work of maintaining peace and otherwise regulating international relationships—an association which, no doubt, will have a profound effect on her own progress. Such has been her advance in less than twenty years from the inferior status of a country partitioned into spheres of influence by Great Britain and Russia.

WAR

CHAPTER VIII

WAR

IT FELL TO ME to see war before the experience became general, when I acted as an agent of relief in the Balkan War of 1912. I then witnessed the grim price of liberty paid by Balkan manhood in ousting the Turk from Europe.

In the base hospitals one found that vast section of the wounded which could be brought home. From the original harvest of the battlefield, collected in the open-air bivouacs, which foreign army medical corps call lazarettos, there had been eliminated, first, those who died before treatment; next, those who died under the surgeon's knife; then those too severely injured to be moved from the *hôpitaux de champ*. From these tent-hospitals, admirably designed and served, each by a staff numbering over one hundred men, the process of evacuation was continually hastened by the arrival of fresh cases for whom no room could be found. Their predecessors, with wounds hastily sterilized and bandaged, were thrust out upon the long journey homewards. Ox-wagons which had

brought ammunition or bread to the front never went back empty. Broken men, who needed to be nursed quietly in bed for many weeks, were crowded into every one. Some could climb into the wagon; many needed stretchers; a few could walk. To most, the jolting in these springless carts must have meant extreme pain. It was evident in the white and drawn faces that one perceived beneath the wagon-hoods, in endless succession, as one rode towards the front along the returning stream. The men marching out, and the mangled carried home, recalled those vast processions in the slaughter-houses of Chicago, where the cattle go forward in endless line and are carried back dismembered.

From Lule Burgas, the pitiless journey back to Bulgaria took eight days. For the Chatalja fight the Turkish railway could be used, and the strain was less terrible; Kirkilisse took the place of Yamboli as the first intermediate base; and those who could find room in the daily train arrived from the front in one day, or two. But even so, many died on the route. It will be realized that the army of invalids who reached the final base at Sofia or Belgrade was a highly selected one. Yet even these

cases, which were comparatively "hopeful", often arrived only just in time to die.

Established at last in a bed and bed-clothes, their names were posted at the hospital door, the first and only announcement of the casualty. In Belgrade, as we passed in at the door, I saw women crowding to read the list. So many relatives had come to see the wounded, dying, or dead, that the work of nursing was impeded. On one side of us lay a corpse, quite unscreened. At the next bed but one to this, an old man held his dying son's hand. In the bed opposite lay a man with ashy face. He would, the nurse said, soon be dead. Relatives were summoned, when possible, before the death. If not, the nurses took down the last message to wife or child; it was tiresome, they said, that the messages took so long to give—the men spoke so slowly. As we passed down the ward, the old man got up to leave; his son's breathing had stopped.

Let us pass from the base to the front. At Chorlu, where the cavalry section of the Chatalja army was quartered, field hospitals were

gathering for the carnage. They had turned to account an empty Turkish house, and installed the wounded from the minor action when Chorlu was taken. The doctor, who spoke good English, asked me to go the rounds. The cases needing dressing were afterwards brought down on stretchers.

The first, a Turk, had the right eye destroyed. The bullet had passed on behind the nose and lodged near the left ear. He was rendered blind on one side and deaf on the other.

A trooper, whose rifle had burst in his face, was dreadfully disfigured. The doctor, one of the most humane, tore the bandage sharply off. He held strongly that only so could the wounds be thoroughly inspected. The man's coat was drenched with suppurating matter—so that a servant was sent to mop it up. Most cases were much more severe than this.

Another trooper had no less than eleven wound marks. Three bullets had gone through the shoulder and two through the arm, making ten holes. One bullet had touched the lung, and a shrapnel fragment had grazed the forearm. This was not a record. At Belgrade, a man had five shrapnel balls (much more deadly

than rifle bullets) embedded in him. Another had fourteen wounds from one percussion shell. Contrasted with these larger missiles, the tiny pointed bullet of the Turkish Mauser often left, after a week, no more mark than a bug-bite. Its praises were in every Bulgarian doctor's mouth. Many men, hating to stop fighting, were perforated three times before they confessed a wound. The bullet cauterized its own tract.

The wounded from Lule Burgas desired vehemently to return to the front. A doctor, performing a desperate operation after Lule Burgas, could catch the man's habitual thought reflected by the subconscious mind. Just before death he muttered, "Get me well to fight at Chatalja."

In some cases men were blinded by shell explosions. Blinding seemed to stupefy the mind. A man so injured said to the doctor, "The flour has got into my eyes, and the mice are eating it."

The majority of infantrymen were hit in the left arm or hand as it was lifted for firing. Shrapnel balls (coming from above the troops as they knelt or lay) struck the shoulders, back, and legs. We saw many men pierced through

the lungs. An officer rode six miles shot just below the heart.

At Philippopolis, the Queen of Bulgaria had installed the hospital which she had controlled in the Manchurian War. Its head, Dr. Michaelovski, had some interesting cases, of which the most remarkable was that of a deep wound in the brain. Trepanning, on the left side, had left the man completely paralysed on the right, except as to the eye.

Stomach wounds were ominously few. They were, the doctors said, nearly always fatal.

At Kirkilisse, about November 22nd, military trains filled with wounded were arriving daily, often long after dark. The men had received one treatment only, and none for a week past. There was no ambulance train. Some travelled in open trucks. Serious operations had not been possible at the front, for practically all Bulgarian doctors were occupied in the field hospitals attached to each division and with the lazarettos on the field of battle.

My brother and I found that in the Bulgarian hospital an intolerable situation existed. The number of men needing to have their wounds

dressed was far greater than could be kept pace with. There were no means of supplying them with fresh clothing, and scores lay about the floor of the improvised building, a mosaic of pain, packed so close that for some days they overflowed into the streets. Those who could walk, and needed treatment, struggled in a dense mass, waiting their turn at the door of the surgery. The staff available for dealing with this emergency consisted of a doctor and five dressers, some of whom had no more experience than myself. The doctor took advantage of our visit of inspection, and begged my brother and myself to join in the work.

These crowded treatment-rooms were a feature of many Bulgarian hospitals. Work was largely done by untrained local women. The whole leisured womanhood of the country was working for the wounded, while the whole manhood was at the front. In one room I saw a girl of fifteen plugging a large hole made by a shrapnel ball in the back of a soldier. Close by was a man wincing under the pain caused by the dressing of an ugly wound on the arm, but his spirits were equal to the occasion. "It makes me dance", he said; "we enjoy all sorts of dancing now."

No anaesthetics were used, not even cocaine. The Balkan soldiers as a rule seemed, on the surface, stolidly indifferent to pain, but the suffering, I should say, was in most cases very great. It was met, however, by extreme fortitude. The men preferred to endure even serious operations without anaesthetics. They were terrified of losing a limb. I heard one man say to the doctor who was preparing to take off his gangrenous arm: "Please kill me rather than take off my arm. If I can't work on my farm, I would rather be dead." They distrusted the doctor, and endured the utmost agony in the hope of avoiding amputation.

We worked in a room some twenty feet square, devoted all day to eight simultaneous treatments, each of which should have had a room and antiseptic apparatus to itself. It was the classroom of an old Turkish school, and between its two low windows the teacher's platform, under the Sultan's monogram (which no one had had time to pull down), further reduced the space. Except for those nearest the windows, it was impossible clearly to see the wound one had to dress. At dusk, when only a small oil lamp was lit, we were all reduced to the necessity of doing delicate

work in semi-darkness. Opposite the windows a sentry held the door, at which a dense crowd of men, hardly fit to stand, waited for hours for their turn to enter. As we finished one dressing after another, the man gave his name to a clerk and limped out. A fresh case was then admitted. Bent often with pain, each would begin trying to pull off the upper or nether garments, stiff with dried blood, which concealed the hole or gash to be dressed. Impeded by broken fingers or a broken limb, and with no one to help, the poor fellows fumbled slowly. Succeeding at last, the man would stand patiently, sometimes almost completely naked, among the crowd perhaps for twenty minutes, till his turn came.

These conditions implied no avoidable deficiency of preparation on the part of the Bulgarians. The whole nation was overtaxed with the sudden call on its resources. It was inevitable that work should be largely amateur and under-manned.

On the part of the wounded I saw no sign of complaint; only once of pain wilfully exaggerated to attract sympathy. There was marvellous patience; no thought of claiming the kindness due to sacrifice; continual signs of gratitude, obviously sincere.

For us amateur dressers the procedure was as follows. We put on one of the white overcoats, snatched one of the lumps of cotton-wool which lay in a dish of "sublimate" (a transparent fluid of whose chemistry we were all ignorant), selected a wound, and began to wash it. At first, finding the men wince, I tried to spare them; however gentle an amateur may wish to be, his clumsiness must give extra pain. But the doctor hurried up, begged me not to waste time, seized the wool and scrubbed the raw flesh as if with a brush; then showed me how to rub in iodine (as painfully caustic as the sublimate), digging it in with a small stick tipped with cotton-wool. Fatigue and monotony soon dispelled all sympathetic feeling in us, and I was able to work as brutally as the best. Following the sublimate and the iodine, one took gauze, cotton-wool, and bandage from the table; when a compress was needed, a Bulgarian woman who stood by, keeping our table supplied, cut oil-silk of the right size. Bandaging is a mystery that one acquires with gratifying speed. I had at least the satisfaction of observing that the bandages which I removed showed even less skill than those with which I replaced them.

The doctors at the front believed in plugging the deep holes in the flesh, and among the cruellest tortures was the pulling out of these plugs. A week's soaking and congealing of blood had made them one solid mass with the bandage. There was no time to unfasten gently, nor any sterilized fluid for softening. No washing was done. Smashed hands were left a mass of dirt all round the wound. When a finger-end was shot through, so that its shape was like a two-pronged fork, it was just brushed with iodine and bandaged over.

Often a bullet was embedded, generally in the back or leg. Then a medical student, a girl of about twenty years, had her reward for the long hours of toil. Digging for a bullet afforded real interest. The man was brought near the light, and the knife probed for the ball. Cries and groans filled the air till the bullet was gripped and extracted. Anaesthetics were scouted, but sometimes a glass of cognac checked the noise for a moment.

A case of deep-seated injury, for instance, a ball embedded in the coccyx, and excruciatingly painful to the sciatic nerve, would be reserved for foreign Red Cross surgeons many days' journey farther on. But problems more ghastly

for the amateur were disposed of at once. There were lacerations by dum-dum bullets. It is said that a hard-nosed bullet sometimes expands on striking a bone, so that these lacerations by expansion did not necessarily prove the Turks guilty of a breach of primary international honour. Foreign military attachés, however, picked up Turkish dum-dum ammunition, and nothing else would have expanded in soft flesh with the dreadful results that were evident in a few cases that came to our surgery. One, for instance, had, in traversing the upper arm, spread so as to make the exit wound quite five inches long. Another, entering the inner side of the thigh, caused, on the other side, a hole quite fourteen inches in length, the flesh protruding in separate oblong masses, mangled together, the skin apparently all carried away. In attempting to treat such a wound, what seemed to be required was an immense courage; I have never known any moral test so severe as the sense of shattering difficulty to be faced. A much slighter dum-dum wound was in the hand. In the palm was the tiny entrance hole; at the back of the hand the core of the bullet had splintered the metacarpal bone; but round the course

taken by this core the soft lead seemed to have sprayed so quickly that in a flight of one inch it had spread to a circle more than an inch wide, carrying away all this extent of sinew and flesh, and leaving a cavernous hollow across which the jagged ends of bone met unevenly. The task was to cut off these loose ends and clean the hole. The man, who fell to my lot, waited in extreme pain for fully ten minutes, with the wound open, till the doctor fetched his long forceps and gripped the end of the bone connecting with the finger. All his strength failed to cut it. The man half swooning as the machinery of the knuckles was twisted to and fro, we gave him brandy. The tension grew intolerable as the minutes passed. At last, the instrument proving unequal to cutting through direct, the doctor was obliged to break the bone instead, finally bending it off as one breaks a stick, the flesh almost tearing as the knuckle and first finger were twisted from their alignment.

The more ruthlessly and quickly we worked, the larger seemed the crowd still needing our services. The air grew fouler, the heat more intolerable, the crush more annoying, the smell

of gangrenous and exposed flesh more disgusting; but never could we get through that endless queue at the door.

The pathos and horror of the situation seemed all the more evident to the intellect, because fatigue had dulled our sensibility.

Here were human beings of a fine type, of pure blood, in the prime of life, free from disease, of a courage and endurance that made them renowned throughout Europe. As one worked on, the mind perceived, with impartial coldness, the incredible waste of splendid human forms lying there like broken statuary.

VICTORY

CHAPTER IX

VICTORY

WITHIN EIGHTEEN DAYS of the outbreak of war, the main Turkish Army had been routed and the Bulgarian Headquarters moved from Stara Zagora towards the Turkish frontier. Motors were available as far as Kizil Agach, and there, by special favour of M. Gueshoff, the Prime Minister, and General Savoff, the Commander-in-Chief, my brother and I became attached to it—a stroke of good fortune on which we could not wish to improve.

On Friday, November 8th, before dawn, we found excellent horses at the door of the peasant's hut which had sheltered us. The baggage was to follow in carts, and for three days we saw it no more. We rode across open country, following the route taken by the First Army. Two squadrons of cavalry formed our escort. In front of them rode the junior officers of the Staff departments; further to the front the heads of sections—cartography, translation, intelligence; General Tsenoff, representing the gunners, General Yankoff, the sappers; finally, at a distance which other

generals tacitly respected, Ficheff, Chief of the Staff, and Savoff himself, distinguished from other generals by no difference of dress or accoutrement, but marked out by a certain air of mental force, as much by the shoulders as by the face.

The moment which a downtrodden race had so long awaited was come. A determined but patient people had found its vindication. Here were the leaders of the liberation, laying firm claim to the fatherland. Bulgarian feeling runs deep—so deep that some think it non-existent. So thrilling, at all events, was this dramatic advance that the most expressive would have felt constrained to hide his emotion.

At about three o'clock we crossed the frontier line. It was marked by a cutting through the oak scrub along the ridge of the rolling hills. One would have supposed, from the silence of the officers, that they had not noticed the fact. The troopers, however, went so far as to betray an interest in their entry into the promised land. They asked the squadron officers if they might raise a hurrah. The captain sternly refused, telling them that General Savoff would not like it.

Within half an hour we came on a burnt

village. Nothing remained alive except the dogs and a few lean cats. Human bodies formed their food—for which grey crows were hungry competitors. The next village was still burning and we stopped to explore. Not a soul remained. Rejoining the Staff, we found them betraying more interest than had been observable before. They had already come upon trenches, the first signs of fighting. Here the First Army had fought its way, heading south-east towards Kirkilisse, while the Third Army, on its left, had descended from the north. There were big graves both of Bulgarians and Turks. Then came another deserted village; from here it was reported that the Turks had carried off twenty-five Bulgarian girls before their retreat.

On the crest of the next ridge we suddenly came to a point overlooking the immense plain of Adrianople. The city, besieged and continually bombarded, lay in the distance. The sound of the cannonade, audible since morning, now grew nearer and insistent. It resembled nothing so much as a succession of stupendous groans, gigantic like the voice of a nation. Shrapnel was bursting over the forts with the effect of a sky-rocket when the stars are dis-

charged and drift with an air of serene calm. Following the explosion, in the steady breeze that was blowing, the compact body of white smoke floated slowly through the cloudless air like a balloon.

We passed the great feudal farm of a Turkish bey. He had tried to protect the villagers. There was a great readiness to speak well of a Turk where he deserved it. Bullocks and buffaloes pulling guns had fallen here. Dogs had torn off the skin and gnawed the muscles next the spine. The flayed and swollen carcases were conspicuous on the brown land, livid with various shades of purple, yellow, and red.

The fighting here, in the first week of the war, caused the Turkish panic. It was a decisive battle, but it was never reported by the Government. In London, its very name was unknown. When I remarked on this, General Ficheff replied: "Why should we report it? We did not want to advertise; we wanted to work."

We arrived, in total darkness, in the muddy lanes of Tatarla, where we found a halting-place for the field hospitals. We were thankful, after ten hours' riding, to find that one of them could be spared for ourselves. Several straw palliasses provided the elderly generals with

KING FERDINAND AND PRINCE BORIS (AFTERWARDS KING) SEE ADRIANOPLE BOMBARDED

a rest, even before supper was ready. The night was dark, but the searchlights of the besieged in Adrianople continually lit up the sky. Sweeping hastily from one quarter to another, circling continually round and lighting up the clouds, they suggested a bad fit of nerves in the garrison. At night, the cannonade was unusually well sustained ("well nourished" was the French expression used), and those were sound sleepers for whom it did not spoil a night's rest.

At Tatarla there was no question of shaving, washing, or undressing, but before starting in the morning there was the luxury of a glass of tea, with bread and cheese, laid out on a field-hospital table outside our tent.

Knowing that the Staff would not ride very fast, we stopped behind to look at the field hospital and talk to the wounded. The whole stream of wounded from Lule Burgas had to be brought by this route into Bulgaria before they could receive anything better than the first aid given at the front. It was almost incredible that the outgoing transport of ammunition and food should entirely pass by muddy tracks, through wooded hills, a journey

of six days from Stara Zagora to Kirkilisse. It was still more astounding that the wounded should survive this journey, and that many very severe cases were successfully treated in Bulgaria at the end of it. The foreign Red Cross Missions, which later came on the scene, found the hardships of sleeping out in their wagons quite sufficiently severe. There were, as a rule, two wounded men to occupy each wagon. At first there was adequate straw or hay, which served not only to relieve the shoulders and hips, but also to increase the width of the wagon, which broadens out upwards from a narrow base; but as the oxen consumed the straw, the bedding became more and more scanty, till finally there were only the narrow planks, some two feet wide, to provide a bed for two injured men. It was sufficiently surprising that even the English members of the Women's Convoy Corps survived this experience without breakdown; all the more was it painful to think of the men with broken bones, and important organs lacerated, jolting for six, and even eight, days in these springless ox-carts, with frost at night, and with no covering but the wicker hood.

I may adequately sum up the situation by

quoting a telegram which I sent to the Balkan War Relief Fund:

> Adrianople not having fallen, wounded must cross mountains. Many days' jolting in springless carts, unsheltered in bitter frost. They stop here in transport hospital; some mutilated. Equipment badly wanted.

Such were the melancholy facts. In many cases mutilation of the most revolting kind had taken place—when fighting shifted from one area to another and Bulgarian soldiers fell into the hands of Turks. Mercifully, there were not many mutilated who remained alive, but some such cases actually lived, and had passed through this hospital. One man survived, but without his ears. The story was as follows: Two men were left wounded together when the Turkish troops advanced. There was a lull in the fighting and the two men were carried into a house, where the Turks interested themselves in cruelty rather than in watching the enemy. Both Bulgarians had the presence of mind to see that their only chance of life was to feign death. The first had sufficient endurance to remain passive as the knife severed his ear. The Turk, thinking him dead, passed on to the other. This one could not restrain a groan, and was immediately stabbed.

The commonest mutilation was the gouging out of eyes; but other practices, which cannot be detailed, meant death (the doctors told me) in two or three hours. I saw no reason to doubt their occurrence, having witnessed what was much worse—women and girls wounded by Turks in the disorders of 1903.

The officer in charge of this hospital proved to be, like most others, a civilian turned soldier for the time. He was a well-known caricaturist of the Sofia press, and had many friends amongst the officers of the Staff. He was also an amateur photographer, and in the inadequate light of the early morning a group was taken, with Savoff in the centre. The caricaturist illustrated the fact that the army was a nation in arms. A little later I was hailed by a man whom I had met in London. He had been Secretary to the Bulgarian Legation, and was now a Red Cross officer. The officer personally attached to me was a well-known owner of flour-mills, and also a concessionaire of pine forests.

Riding out of Tatarla we passed a transport convoy of record length. These convoys were the great feature of a transport route in the Balkans. There was not a farm in the combatant countries which had not sent its wagon and

oxen to the front. These wagons were all of the same type—built almost entirely without metal, without springs, and with a wicker hood; usually drawn by two grey bullocks, but sometimes by the even more complacent buffalo, with his long tilted nose and his white eyes contentedly fixed on the sky. Their pace is so slow that in the distance a convoy hardly appeared to move. It stretched across the valley before one and up the opposite hill, disappearing out of sight over the ridge like a vast and almost motionless snake. Such a convoy seemed symbolic of the stolid but irresistible mind of the people. The simple construction of the wagons and the very slowness of the beasts constituted a security against breakdown. The inexhaustible patience of the oxen and their drivers, who were often Turks from Bulgaria, matched the unlimited supply of wagons at the service of the State. Sometimes, as in this case at Tatarla, the same convoy whose rear one was passing might be continuous even for several miles. Though it disappeared below the hill a mile off, it was the same entity which one could dimly perceive mounting the next ridge or the next after that. There was a sense that, however slow and

however distant the goal, the convoy, and the Bulgarian race, would arrive.

It is scarcely believable that but two years separated this primitive transport in war from the fast and powerful motor-lorry which the wealth and technique of the West placed not only on the Western front, but also in the Balkans, in order to feed and sustain the world in arms in the great war which was so soon to follow.

It was a very different side of the picture when one met the convoys returning from the front. Riding close beside the wagons one could see the feet of a wounded man swathed in the native fashion, which he refused to discard in favour of boots; sometimes a pale and drawn face indicated the degree of endurance that was required to pass through the ordeal of this journey.

At midday we came to Yenije, on the main road from Adrianople eastward. We stopped here for lunch, and some of the older generals went on in motors. I had passed through Yenije after the insurrection of 1903, when the massacres had just taken place. The victims had been hurriedly buried. There is a wide sandy river, mostly bare, except in time of

flood, and crossed by a long wooden bridge. The sandy bed was a convenient burial-place. The bed of the river now served for burial of a different kind from that of 1903. At intervals, as we crossed the bridge, I saw the hoofs of a horse emerging from the sand where it had been hurriedly covered. Its position was thus conveniently marked to avoid the waste of labour in digging a second grave where the ground was already occupied. Little did I expect to see the open green of Yenije, where nine years ago the surviving inhabitants slunk out of sight in terror, now occupied by a concourse of Christian troops. To-day a Bulgarian trooper held my horse while I lunched, where formerly I had begged the loan of a pony from a Turkish cavalryman.

Our surroundings now became doubly interesting. Our route was one of the few real roads in Turkey, and the Turks had opportunely furnished it with a supply of excellent stone in readiness for remaking. This stone had been placed in long heaps at the side of the road, and constituted a ready-made trench for the fight which had preceded the fall of Kirkilisse.

For several miles the south side of the road

was lined with abandoned gun-carriages, dead horses, here and there a corpse. One, half buried in mud, had two gashes on the scalp, a deep cut in the neck, and the nose almost severed from the face. The cavalry had left little time for gun-drivers to escape. This man had lingered too long. The Turks failed to hold the line of the road and fled south across open country. The soil here is heavy, and as it was wet weather, some of the ruts made by the guns were at least eighteen inches deep. When the guns stuck fast the men cut loose enough horses for themselves, threw away the firing-pieces of the gun, shot the remaining horses, and rode away. There were commonly three carcases lying together, and dogs from the burned villages were living on their half-putrid flesh. Broken carts lay in every direction. The ground was strewn with rifle-cartridge, shrapnel, and heavy shell abandoned in the retreat. Farther on, towards Bunarhissar, the banks by the road were almost lined with unused shrapnel. The flight had been so hasty that the crowd of wagons and gun-carriages spread out on each side of the road. Whole boxes of ammunition had been thrown overboard in the frantic endeavour to get the wagons

through the mud. I must have seen at least 30,000 unused gun-cartridges in a three hours' ride.

It was a thrilling experience for one who had visited Kirkilisse in bygone years to enter it now with the victorious army. Bulgarian reserve is a quality to be admired, but on this occasion it appeared excessive. It seemed an epitome of the Bulgarian character when Savoff, avoiding all demonstration, hurried through the town in a closed carriage. Every house had hung out a flag, and the people crowded to their doors, but the whole Staff, heedless of their welcome, hastened up the steep cobbled road and, dismounting at the Turkish Officers' Club, betook themselves to examining Turkish maps. The officers were chiefly concerned to show me that on these maps the Turkish boundary was drawn to include Bulgaria.

In another hour a frugal supper was served in the very room from which Mahmud Mouktar, Commander of the garrison, had fled in such haste that his sweetmeats were left behind. No notice was taken of the momentous significance of that repast; from generals to lieutenants the officers seemed uninterested in it.

The rooms of the Turkish Club were at

once turned to account as offices; connecting them was a large upper hall, and here some forty officers sat down to supper—Savoff and Ficheff presiding together. There was a massive quality about Savoff which defied description. He reminded me of nothing so much as that rare type of Englishman, born a squire, but by nature and in fact a leader of men; occupied with great affairs, but when at home joining the crowd of commonplace people, shooting or hunting or golfing without claiming for himself any special regard: the head massive, the figure not disproportionate, and yet a short man; genial, yet apart, with an air of large condescension, potentially sociable, but reserved and preoccupied; a man to inspire confidence. Ficheff's bright eyes concealed a reserve impenetrable even for a Bulgar, but on one subject he opened out—the wrongs of a people worthy of freedom; the five centuries of suffering; the deserted land. Delighted with the outwitting of the Turks, he had been surprised by the superb quality of his troops. There was news that night. The hierarchy at Stamboul had declared the war to be a *Jehad*—a war of religion, and the green flag waved at Chatalja. For once the stir of feeling found expression.

We sat smoking late, enjoying the thought of liberation. The Balkan mother would sing to her child in peace, and girls would be merry without fear. The blight that had lain on the Balkan lands was healed, the fog dispelled. Even the prestige of military power was gone like a pricked bubble, and the tyranny that rested on bluff had vanished like an empty nightmare that fades when the sleeper wakes. The establishment of Europe's freedom was achieved, the final step taken.

But out there, under the frosty sky, lay the battered corpses; trodden on; rolled in the mud; viewed in times of peace, by men in their senses, as the image of God, and now regarded with less respect than a dead rat by an English roadside.

THE SAHARA

CHAPTER X

THE SAHARA

I HAD NOT previously seen tent-dwellers nearer than the frontier districts of Persia and Turkey. Even there, in the vast pastoral downs of Kurdistan, the Kurds leave their tents in winter and invade the underground houses made by the Armenians. But within one day's drive from Algiers—only three days from London—you find the Arabs preferring their tents of black camel's-hair cloth. Seeing them far away on the naked plain, you might mistake the tents for gigantic tortoises.

Only four days from London we were entertained by a Sheik who, though he frequented Paris every year, prefers his tent when at home. Motoring out from Lagouat, we were met by twenty of his retainers on well-bred Arab horses and carrying arms. They advanced in groups of four, racing up to us with their white robes flowing, and discharging their rifles as they galloped. Then they retired, and this time charged all together, suddenly pulling up close to us in a cloud of dust.

The Chief then led us to his tent—as big

as a large marquee, supported on numberless poles, the floor entirely covered with lovely carpets, and the sides open to the warm wind. We realized the surroundings in which lived Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this ideal dining-room we squatted round a large tray and ate as many courses as the cramped position of our bodies would allow. When at last it seemed impossible to find room for another mouthful, a whole sheep, cooked with the head standing up like a roast rabbit, was brought in, and we were exhorted to seize the meat with our fingers. It would have been bad manners to refuse, or even to use a knife and fork. We did our best, and suffered in silence.

It is the custom to extol the noble traditions of Mahomedan hospitality. I did not think them perfect. I was too conscious of the fact that within fifty yards of us, cooped up out of sight, were all the time hidden the Chief's wives, like prisoners serving a life-sentence.

The women of the humbler class must, of course, leave the house or tent for work, but the veil is strictly maintained—at the most one eye being visible to the passer-by. Seclusion

has a marked influence on the general appearance of Moslem countries. Half the charm of foreign travel lies in the picturesque effect of both sexes of all ages moving about, especially when, as in Eastern Europe, peasant dresses add bright colours. In North Africa, not only is the visible population mainly confined to men and boys, but colour is also absent, because the usual garb is a dirty white robe—often in rags.

What matters much more is the waste of human potentialities, the cruelty inseparable from total subordination, and the hopeless narrowness of the harem. An Arab who prides himself on his rank and station will boast that his daughter is so well brought up that she does not even know the way along the street where she lives.

At a party which included French officers and their wives and a Europeanized Arab, the latter was asked if he did not think the women should get freer by degrees. He declared himself strongly conservative. The ladies replied facetiously, "But no conservative yourself", for he was breaking the religious law by drinking wine.

Such conservatism does Islam produce that there is strong opposition to Western hygiene, though the lady doctors and the order of nuns

called "White Sisters" are ready to provide treatment in the harem itself. At one place the French officials were offering to pay a reward to any Arab who would consent to receive medical treatment, but in vain. Elsewhere there is some progress in the use of modern hospitals. Conservatism goes with the fatalism of Islam, whose ideal is a resigned acceptance to the will of God. If you are ill, if your crop fails, if your mule is hopelessly lame, it is blasphemous to try to improve on Allah's plan.

A French official's wife, who works at one of the maternity centres known as the "Goûtes du Lait", finding a child ill from dirt, was proceeding to wash it. The mother shrieked with piteous entreaty—it was dangerous to wash a child under three years of age. It will evidently take time for the modernist school in Islam—which is a factor in Egypt and Turkey—to penetrate North Africa. I did, indeed, meet a most attractive Arab of solid intelligence, as well as learning, who said he ignored the puerile (he called them "poetic") parts of the Koran and concentrated on its idealistic sections. He was equally satisfied if heathen negroes were converted to Islam or Christianity. But he was hardly typical. And

even the modernist Mahomedan is conservative. The greatest apologist for Islam, my old Harrow master, Bosworth-Smith, expressed the view that "the religion of Christ contains whole fields of morality which are outside the religion of Mahomed—humility, purity of heart, forgiveness, sacrifice of self, toleration".

The desert stretches illimitably around, flat and smooth like the sea, so that the earth disappears below the horizon about three miles away if your eye is six feet above the ground. You seem to be in the centre of a shallow saucer, presumably because any ordinary land which hides the distance at three miles would be hilly or undulating. Therefore, when the land disappears, you feel as if it must be hilly and above your own level.

Some of the desert, it must be admitted, is positively hideous, and for some strange reason the expression "howling wilderness" seems appropriate. But there is desert of many kinds—undulating, mountainous, evenly strewn with sharp stones, ugly, with shapeless rocks, totally bare, or spotted with a dozen plants to the acre, resembling dead tufts of heather, but

sufficient to support a camel, and, indeed, capable of maintaining sheep.

Mile after mile the motor follows the track that other motors have made, with occasional posts or stone erections designed to guide the traveller in his general direction and to save him from being totally lost in a sandstorm.

Speeding through such solitude provides one with a new exhilaration. You are in a world without obstacles; you could run straight on for two thousand miles; the mind feels a fresh liberation and anxieties fade away. Hour after hour you rush through warm air, and in spite of being thrown, at rocky places, against the roof of the car (your helmet saves your skull) sleep overtakes you; you wake up to find the same humming of the engine and the same vast solitude.

If people go to the desert for its loneliness, to meditate like the anchorites who used to frequent it, they should get tents and camels or horses, and avoid hurry; but peaceful travel has been destroyed by the invention of the desert car. This car has four driving wheels, each of them double, and it is so contrived that all four wheels may be on widely different levels, gripping the ground over a sufficient surface

to drive the car up any slope, whether flat or rocky.

By this invention the desert oases, hitherto a six or eight days' camel journey apart, can be exploited for tourism; and the "Transat" Company is pushing out so fast that it expects to bring into its regular tours the fabulous town of Timbuctoo, on the Niger River.

These cars are the only ones capable of covering more quickly than camel speed (four miles per hour) the kind of desert which we are taught to regard as typical, but which is only one of many kinds, viz. the sand dunes. If you imagine our own seaside dunes without a blade of grass, and rising to every variety of height up to five hundred feet, you know the look of the kind of desert which, to my mind, has real beauty. It is all in perfectly graceful and delicate curves, with now and then a sharp edge along the ridges where the wind has made an eddy and caused a sudden cliff on the leeward side. The surface is smooth, with little ridges like those made by the sea on a falling tide; and at evening the shining surface, contrasting with the deep shadows, gives an effect extraordinarily like snowy mountains when lit by a golden sunset. A very pretty thing on

the dunes is the track of animals, more exact than on any snow. You can see each claw of a beetle and tell exactly what he did.

There is no road, because the dunes keep moving with the wind, and you have to surmount ridges the sides of which are sometimes as steep as 45 degrees. The driver accelerates for all he is worth, and you get up perhaps twenty miles an hour over the heavy sand. You charge up the slope—entirely ignorant of what lies beyond. If you reach the top you suddenly find yourself at the edge of a precipice. You gasp at the prospect of a somersault down the cliff. But in a trice you are saved. You feel the sand sinking under the car, and you slide down slowly at about 30 degrees. Often, however, we charged repeatedly without success —backed down, and tried another route.

Motoring over the dunes provides such novelty as almost to constitute a sport, and I am inclined to think that just as the English invented "Wintersport" in the snow, they will develop a game out of the dunes for which the next generation will be swarming to Africa instead of to Switzerland.

The right way to see the desert is quite different.

Find an Arab who has camping equipment and knows some owners of camels; make up your party, and leave modern life behind. At the appointed time we forgathered at the rendezvous, with coats and knapsacks. You must not expect Orientals to keep engagements; but within an hour the camels turned up, three for baggage and five for our party—one with a foal running beside her. Why not start? Quite impossible. Why? We must wait for the musician. When at last this unexpected equipment arrived he proved to be an aged Moor with a long bamboo flute, who shared a camel with the Arab leader. It transpired that the leader was fond of singing, and music certainly came in useful.

I was relieved that we had something better to sit on than the saddle of the Tuareg tribe, which had been our fate hitherto. As this saddle is in front of the hump, and slopes forward, you are only supported by planting your feet on the camel's neck. You have no stirrups to support you sideways. This is awkward when the camel rises. He elevates his body to the height of his legs by three rocking-horse motions. In the first, he sits up like a dog sitting on its tail; as you cling on forwards, he sud-

denly jumps up behind till he seems standing on his head; you fall on to it just as the front of him rises again, and you get level at about eight feet from the ground. Once settled into his stride, the camel's paces are delightful.

Imagine yourself, after hours of easy motion, arriving at your camping ground among the sandy dunes. Off the two baggage animals your men produce three sleeping-tents, a larger tent for meals, and a cook's tent equipped with material for producing a hot four-course dinner. The cook did all this with no better stove than a cunning arrangement of iron bars surrounding a thin layer of charcoal, with other bars to support the saucepans over it.

Before tea you explore the dunes, and then the incredible colours of sunset in the desert occupy you till the full darkness. Returning then from the dune-tops, I found the leader and the flute-player enjoying music by themselves, the former singing an improvised sentence (a maxim from the Koran, if he was to be believed) and the musician responding with a phrase of notes. I enjoyed myself lying flat on the sand beside them and watching the stars come out. We put off dinner to see the moon rise, and afterwards a bonfire was lit.

THE SAHARA DUNES

As we sat round it, the eight Arabs sang to us, and we Europeans did our best in return. Two of our party being Irish, I myself contributed *The Bells of Shandon*. Then the camels were brought back from grazing (on what seemed to be dead scrub) and made to lie in a group. A cool breeze had sprung up, and when we turned in for the night I saw in the moonlight (brighter than a London day in November) that the mare had moved her foal over to the leeward side of her to keep it warm.

Even with heavy quilts we felt the cold, and I marvelled at the Arabs sleeping in the open in cotton robes. The spoilt Englishman watched the sunrise from his snug camp-bed, and got an omelette for breakfast (as well as a *café complet*) in the mess-tent.

The desert is apt to play you tricks, and the hotels have orders to send out search parties if a car does not arrive when expected. We observed one day that a storm had burst in some distant mountains, but all was dry along our route, till suddenly we came on a roaring torrent, brown with mud and rushing headlong with raging waves. I had stuck in a much

milder torrent before now, and it seemed to me obvious that before driving in someone should try the depth by wading. But the French chauffeur knew better, he said, and plunged. Within five yards of the edge the engine was out, the water rushing over the bonnet, and the car heeling over. Being on the lower side I had the prospect of being pinned under water, and began to climb to the upper side. The water was far too rapid for anyone to wade or swim, and it looked like spending the night where we were. But by good fortune my companion was Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who displayed the calm of great men. With superb circumspection he counselled sitting still, and quickly noticed that the water-line at the bank was falling. The car had jammed against a rock, which prevented its rolling over. Instead, therefore, of trying to wade out, which would have been fatal, we waited. These sudden floods, where no river valley exists, fall very rapidly, and at last our mechanic was able to climb to the bonnet and turn the handle under water. By some miracle he got the engine running, and with the help of picks and shovels we backed out.

Our troubles were not over. At the next

torrent the Frenchman again was reckless—the further bank was too steep to climb up. This time we were only saved by the chance that another car turned up on the far side and hauled us out.

Then yet another phenomenon. A third torrent had deposited a huge sheet of hail-stones, two feet deep—collected, I suppose, by some waterspout on a wide surface and drifted together.

The performances of the desert car in getting us through these adventures were quite amazing. But they had not saved us from disaster. The luggage had been under water for an hour; every garment was lined with a thick layer of mud, and the crimson of the native leather —carefully bought for Christmas presents at home —had been imprinted on our favourite suits.

Owing to the occasional rains and the heavy dew, the desert grows plants. The main feature is the almost total absence of trees, but the one tree that the desert does produce has miraculous qualities.

In an area of perhaps 10,000 square miles you find an oasis—a few acres of unstable

land—watered by springs or wells and producing with a concentrated activity a dense mass of date-palms. No other tree but palms, and no other of the numberless varieties of palm but the date-palm. It is generally too formal to be beautiful. For me, its main aesthetic merit seemed to come at sunset, when, if one caught a single distant palm against the astonishing blaze of the sinking desert sun, the tree produced an effect of intense and poetic loneliness. If one goes to the Tate Gallery, one will see this phenomenon developed in the landscapes of Turner.

The date-palm develops all the timber that the desert towns are built of. The sap is a popular drink; and, above all, the fruit is highly sustaining. It furnishes all the food that an Arab requires. It is said that thirty-six dates a day will nourish even a European.

In addition, the fronds make good fencing and good fuel, and the stalk of the fruit clusters is specially good for producing fire by friction. You have only to make a groove in the wood and rub sand along it with another piece, pressing hard on to it; in a minute the wood gets brown with heat and flakes off, collecting at the end of the groove. Then you put the

hot flakes into a frayed end of the same dry stalk and blow till sparks come. This is then wrapped in a handful of the fibre which grows next the trunk and waved rapidly to make a draught, till the fibre bursts into flame in your hand.

If you are to be reduced to one single kind of tree, you could not invent a better "universal provider".

The most pleasing feature in desert life is the reappearance of birds which we know in England, and which have left us in the autumn. Here are the cuckoos, which disappeared in August, and the swallows, which had only just collected for flight when we left home in October. The goldfinches and wheatears seem just as much in harmony with their surroundings in the desert as in our richly-clothed land, where bare soil is hardly seen unless you turn it up.

Various birds which love human buildings are well suited to native houses, which consist of galleries round a court open to the sky. On a ledge over a staircase I found a nest with eggs, which surprised me, as it was autumn. But I learnt that autumn, for non-migratory birds, is the time for nesting. If hatched

in the spring the young birds would die in the scorching summer. This explains why we could not see hawking, which the natives delight in. They wait till mid-winter, when the nesting is over, and they do not keep hawks all the year, as our ancestors did, but catch them for the season only. They actually catch full-grown hawks and tame them quickly by starving them. The method is clever. They release a tame pigeon with a stone attached. The hawk catches the pigeon and, finding it heavy, soon descends. The man, watching, finds the dead pigeon, wraps it up in fine netting, ties it to a stone, and then departs. The hawk returns to eat the pigeon, gets entangled, and is captured. After three days without food the hawk is quickly tamed and ready to be taken out for sport, and when he catches the partridge or other quarry he is so hungry that he does not fly away but lets the sportsman catch him again.

Apart from birds, which include great bustards and hoopoes, you might travel all day without seeing any signs of animals except the holes of jerboas. But those which exist are curious. In the oases there are praying mantises, which fold their hands as if in prayer, and an insect which, when frightened, discharges

a cloud like smoke, as the cuttlefish clouds the water with ink.

I saw only one lizard, and no snakes, as the hot weather had passed. But at El Hamma I saw the black desert snakes in their domesticated form being shown off by a snake-charmer. It was evidently a great treat for the Arabs. They sat or stood round a small open space in such dense numbers that not another person could have seen the show. The snakes, which were some five feet long, raised their heads about two feet from the ground and expanded a kind of hood, while they swayed to and fro to the music of a primitive bagpipe. The charmer then hypnotized one, so that it lay quite straight and could hardly be woken again. To show that the poisonous teeth had not been extracted, the showman held it by the neck, and certainly showed us the fang, lifting it out of the gum with a nail.

There is a lunching place for motorists in the hills near Algiers, where the wild baboons have been tamed by feeding and provide good fun. They are insatiable in their demands for peanuts. We lunched indoors in order to eat in peace. We then had coffee out of doors and fed them again. When you are tired of

feeding them they watch you till you look the other way. Suddenly there is a crash. A huge old monkey has jumped on the table, upset the sugar, and got away, clasping several lumps between his hands and chest, with extraordinary dexterity.

Life in the desert could hardly be maintained without two animals of amazing capacity—the goat and the camel. It is sometimes impossible to detect any article of food other than sand on which the goats in some places are living. They are very fond of paper, and a French officer declared that he kept a stock of old newspapers so that when he wanted an extra supply of milk he could give his goats their favourite food.

The miraculous powers of the camel, his capacity to go long journeys without food or drink, are too well known to repeat. But I had not realized that when he does get a feed it consists of no more than what looks like twigs. No one who has seen the camels carrying their immense loads, never turning a hair, never sick or sorry, never put out except when, on being loaded, they emit noises like those of the lion and the cow combined, can fail to feel a profound regard for the beast

One must admire above all the camel's dignity. Often our car rushed past camels within a foot or two—a terrifying experience for them —but though obviously frightened they walked off as if too proud to trot. If lying down by the track, they rise, when disturbed, with a nonchalant and dignified air, as if they felt they ought to pretend to be getting up out of civility.

The camel provides transport, milk, meat, and wool—everything his master needs except waterskins, which are got from goats. He even provides meat without being killed. Arabs eat little, and it is said that a Tuareg travels without taking food. If nothing else turns up, he draws some blood from his camel's shoulder and cooks it. Next day he draws some from his hindquarters. Next day perhaps he kills a snake. Finally, he cuts into the camel's hump, gets some fat, and sews the skin up again.

Of all the remarkable phenomena that I saw in Africa, the most remarkable was an Englishwoman who spends her life and private means in the service of animals. This lady settles for a few weeks in one town after another, goes out at dawn to the *fondouks*, or open-air livery stables, where countrymen coming to

market leave their beasts for the day, doctors their wounds and sores, cajoles the owner into giving the sick donkey a rest, spends hours dressing wounds reeking with maggots, endures the filth and stench even in the burning summer heat, and with miraculous diplomacy stirs up kindness and kills resentment in Arabs and French alike.

North Africa gave me for the first time an interest in the Roman Empire. When I spent the usual eight years in learning Latin it was not the fashion to give boys any reason for selecting this study as their main duty while at school. One gets only glimpses of the greatness of Rome in European travel; even in Italy they are obscured, and above all they are obscured at Rome.

It is in North Africa that you have the most vivid picture of the Empire. You have theatres, amphitheatres, temples, and aqueducts everywhere; you even have whole towns and military camps, not indicated by isolated buildings, but displayed in their entirety and in the connection which makes Rome important, viz. their function in governing alien peoples. It is all the more interesting because North Africa and

Britain were similar provinces. In both countries the Romans were checked by wild tribes, and the same Emperor (Hadrian) planned the rampart of the Roman Wall at the Solway (in A.D. 117) and the line of forts in the Atlas Mountains. But while North Africa was controlled by one legion, our British predecessors were so stubborn that to govern them required three—a fact which filled me with an irrational pride.

At Timgad you see the arch which Septimius Severus built in A.D. 193 when he made his tour of inspection and consolidation. With the lessons of Africa in his mind he went on to England, and died at York.

Everyone knows that Rome was powerful, that she gave the world a long peace, a literature, an idea of law and order, and an architecture which, in spite of the brutality that went with them, concern us as do those of no other State, because we inherited them. But the liberalism with which Rome brought subject peoples into her citizenship and civilization I had not realized till I saw the relics of the Empire in North Africa. The Roman citizens in Africa were mostly not Roman. The native Berbers learned to govern, and, indeed, to build. The colossal amphitheatre of

El Djem, so vast that a whole town is hidden by it, is a monument to the success of the Roman as a teacher.

We visited the headquarters of the Roman Legion at Lambese. There you see the only Praetorium still standing—the central hall, such as the Praetorium where Christ was judged by Pilate. Near it are the stores, where thousands of heavy stone balls were found—the actual projectiles for the great catapults. There are whole streets of small living-rooms. The legionaries were too important to be herded in dormitories like modern soldiers.

The French try hard to reproduce Roman imperialism to-day, and one gets from both Empires interesting reflections upon the great question of "the White Man's burden". Modern imperialism has so often forgotten the interests of the conquered in the pursuit of power and wealth for the conqueror, that any light on this problem is worth having.

One of my companions was a keen critic of the Powers in the scramble for Africa; but he was also a classical scholar, and I noticed that he never seemed to condemn the Romans. Nor was this due merely to scholastic prejudice, for I found him ready to admit that empire is

to the good if it adds to the welfare of the governed in the widest sense. If native government means the enjoyment of power by the few, and the misery of the many, it is not enough for the theorist to answer that the people would rather be wretched of their own choice than happy by foreign help. It is the native tyrant who scores, and not the native worker, by freedom to kill and rob, or exploit in factories without regard to health or safety.

Imperialism must protect the under-dog if it is to justify itself, and it has seldom tried to do so. The Romans did succeed in civilizing the native and satisfying him to such an extent that when a fortress grew into a town it ceased to have even a defensive wall. One sees at Timgad the early wall obliterated and built on by the extending houses and streets.

The French have not arrived at this point, and you see repeatedly a fortified wall maintained for defence of the French population in case of insurrection. Decidedly, however, they have provided a better order—in wealth, in order, and even in education. There are primary schools for the natives, with French teachers numbering some thousands, and rudimentary teaching largely on technical subjects. The

desert regions are under military government, and the officers who rule them have to pass through a year's course at Algiers, studying native conditions and the law and doctrine of Islam. The Government has perhaps been clever in not educating too much. There is no glut of briefless native lawyers busy in fomenting a "home rule" movement. In any case, Mahomedan fatalism teaches submission to *force majeure*.

The country presents a unique example of Europeans settling down alongside non-Europeans. British possessions are either completely European, like Australia, or completely native; South Africa presents a near parallel, but its populations of black and white have no counterpart in the blended masses of French and natives, frequenting the same cafés in a manner which, to a British colonist, would be unthinkable.

No doubt the Arab curses the French conqueror, especially when the foreigner's car rushes inconsiderately by, upsetting the minds and also the bodies of his heavily loaded camels and mules; but if the Arabs had really to choose between French rule (with its frequent use of native officials) and the corrupt anarchy of the Turkish regime which it replaced, they would, no doubt, agree with a learned Arab

who said to me, "The French occupation is a good thing on a balance."

* * * * *

Our tale is told. The reader has had a glimpse of lands and peoples whose strangeness is losing its edge before the levelling force of the motor-car, the aeroplane, and the wireless. Even the surface differences between East and West are fast disappearing. In the shadow of the Mosque of St. Sophia the suburban bowler, for instance, sits reluctantly on the head of every Turk by order of Kemal—the Westernizer. King Amanullah, in his devotion to this emblem of Western respectability, has even lost his throne, and is fighting bravely on, determined to do or die in a cause which will make of Kabul another Balham. While there is yet time, the reader should bestir himself and set out on his pack-horse before the oncoming flood of Westernism engulfs the colour and romance of the remaining untamed regions of the world.

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